

Camas

Volume 5
Number 2 *Spring 2002*

Article 1

Spring 2002

Camas, Spring 2002

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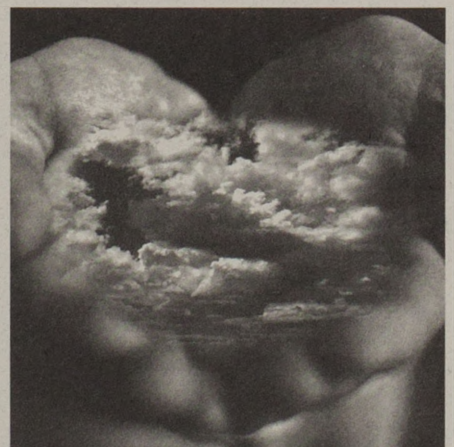


david james duncan
jennifer ferenstein
archie mcmillan

spring 2002

volume 5 number 2

three dollars





The social, cultural, and economic
values of Montana's bovine
business run deep.

— page 20

*cover photographs: Jay Ericson
inside cover photograph: Gabriella Brown
back cover photograph: Danielle Gardner*

The Big Sky Issue

Spring 2002



"The old,
dependable,
rising sun of
each day is
really another
sun each time.
And yesterday's
sun forever."

page 26



Features

Our Good Fortune

David James Duncan meditates on compassion and respect in our society, post 9-11.
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Chambers

Clara Sophia Weygandt relates how an encounter with a peregrine falcon changed her life.
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"Door!" Casey shouts moments before he lifts the Cessna's hatch up toward the wing.

A sudden gust slaps stray hairs against my cheek. The air is even colder than I had expected. Casey waves me toward the open door. I lick my lips in vain; between my nerves and the breeze whipping through the tiny cabin, my mouth is a desert. I crawl toward the opening and sit, dangling my feet outside the plane. Casey is already out there—on the wing. "Climb out," he yells. Though I can barely hear him, I know what he said. We must have gone through this 50 times on the ground over the last few days, rehearsing in the life-size, wooden model.

Before I have a chance to think about it, I climb out too, just like we practiced. I stretch my left foot to the small step above the wheel and push myself from the doorway toward the strut, the bar that runs diagonally from the wing to the plane's body. Casey holds my right arm to balance me as I make the transition. Ron, the other instructor, climbs out next. They each get a handhold on my jumpsuit. After we let go, they will both hold on to help stabilize me during freefall, to keep me from tumbling out of control. They'll be at my side until I pull my ripcord or they are in danger, whichever comes first. It is my responsibility to open my parachute. It is my job to steer myself back to the drop zone.

It's easy to hang on, I thought. I'm not going to just blow away. I glance down. Cars are tiny specks. Houses look fake. I see the plane's shadow gliding over Independence, Missouri. A surge of adrenaline floods my head. Sandwiched between my two instructors and clinging to the strut, white-knuckled, staring straight ahead into nothing but sky, my body begins to protest.

Hold on tight, my gut demands. 11,000 feet to the ground. Do not let go.

My head rebuts, There's no turning back now; it's too late.

Don't let go.

It's too late.

Hold on.

Too late.

Hold....

Casey waves his hand in my face. *Right, the count.* I'm not ready. Ron and Casey give me a second, but I suspect they know that first time jumpers aren't really ever ready. *One, two....* I mouth the count with them while the three of us rock as a single unit, in and out from the strut. On "three," despite instincts to cling, my hands peel away. My eyes squint shut, my mouth opens wide, my throat stings, and I hear nothing but engine and air. It's the same feeling that I have in nightmares, when I channel all my energy toward my vocal chords but still can't scream.

I feel nothing for the first 15 or 20 seconds of freefall except fear—not of hitting the ground, not of getting tangled in the parachute, but fear of suffocating. Falling at 200 miles-per-hour, I can't exhale against the force of the air. *I'm going to inhale to death.*

Why on Earth, people ask me, would anyone jump out of a perfectly good airplane? Consciously. Willingly. I can't speak for all skydivers, but as a 20-year-old from the 'burbs of the Midwest, jumping out of a plane seemed like the scariest, craziest, most out-of-control thing I could ever attempt. If I could muster the courage to do this, I thought, I could do *anything*. I was seeking more, however, than just an adrenaline rush.

For as long as I can remember, I always wished—on birthday candles, on 11:11 o'clock, on eyelashes on my cheek—for the gift of flight. A fascination with winged creatures is part of it; even as a kid, bird- and bug-watching were some of my favorite pastimes. Nevertheless, something has always drawn me to the sky itself. Perhaps it is the pure mystery of it, the fact that we don't really know much about what lies beyond the clouds and the stars. Or maybe it's space that I seek—the extra bit of elbow room that's hard to find in an over-crowded

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Camas provides a forum for discussion of environmental issues and is a place for creative writing dedicated to the nature of the West.

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Camas receives support from the Associated Students of the University of Montana, the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Montana, and many generous individuals and businesses. Thanks especially to all those who have recently purchased or subscribed to our journal—please let us know what you think about *Camas* by dropping us a line. Thanks also to our hard-working staff members; their enthusiasm and creativity are greatly appreciated.

We invite submissions of article ideas, prose, poetry, and artwork. Please visit our website for details.
Thanks.

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society—or the perspective that I only find when I can step back and see the whole picture.

Even more, I am fond of the idea that all Earthlings share the same sky. That I can wonder at the constellations from Missoula, knowing that my family and friends—in Missouri, Indiana, California, the Bahamas—have nearly the same view above their rooftops, makes them feel closer. Somehow, this connection makes everyone in the world feel a little closer, a little less foreign, a little less different. It's something we can all relate to. Something we all know. And being in the sky, alone—just birds and clouds, the air and me—offered a raw experience of this unifying element. A chance to be consumed by it. A chance, perhaps, to understand...

I guess I was drawn to the sky and skydiving, in one way or another, by all of these factors—mystery, freedom, connection—and they still tug at me. Here in the Big Sky state, I am often lured to a nearby mountaintop for the afternoon where, with an unimpeded view and a brisk breeze on my skin, I feel a calm that I find only in solitude and a certain comfort, a warmth, that I associate with kinship—not just to other humans, but to all life.

Casey snaps me out of my panicked daze with a signal reminding me to do my first-jump drills. I look at my altimeter, the watch-like instrument strapped to my wrist. Then I pretend to pull my ripcord; as I reach my right arm toward my hip, my left arm moves above my head. If I don't do this right, I'll flip. And if I'm flipping when my parachute deploys, I'll get tangled in the lines; I could "bounce," as they say. Again I check my altitude, fake the pull, check the altitude again. Like the plane exit, I practiced the drills on the ground many times, and they come easily now. In the familiarity of the movements, I forget to panic; I relax. I stop fighting the wind and settle into it. The air feels crisp, cool, refreshing, no longer suffocating.

My altimeter reads 5500 feet, and I signal that I am still paying attention. At 4500 I pull my ripcord, and the ride abruptly changes gears. As the spring-loaded parachute opens, it yanks my torso and slings my head and limbs forward. I feel like a rag doll snatched up by the back of her shirt.

I recover from the jolt, and a voice comes through my headset reminding me to check the canopy. It looks good, no tangles. Following the ground-instructor's directions, I test the rig's handling: turn left, turn right, stall. The parachute steers like a barge, with delayed reactions to my toggling. The hurricane-force gust has been replaced by a light breeze. Everything is slower now. I have time to relax and look around. I see the mall to the south, the airport and drop zone to the north. The interstate, with toy cars zipping along, runs between the two. I wonder how far I can see; it seems like forever. I feel small and alone, yet I sense that I am part of something much larger. Floating above a cornfield, I face the setting sun. I close my eyes, listen to the nylon ruffling above me, and feel the air gradually warm as I sail toward the ground.

— Jan Scher

The FLOWER MARKET

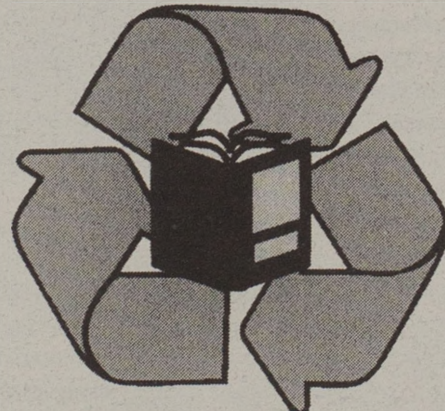


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POETRY AS ACTIVISM

This spring, University of Montana students and faculty contributed to an international campaign to stop unsolicited CD-rom junk mail. Instead of tossing the disks in the trash, folks in the EVST program have been pooling them for shipment to the Berkeley, CA group No More AOL CDs (NMAC).

NMAC started with a couple of guys who, like many of us, were fed up with the seemingly endless stream of America Online promotional disks delivered to their mailboxes. So far, NMAC has collected over 21,000 disks, some from as far away as Germany, France, and the U.K. When one million disks are collected, NMAC will deliver them to AOL's national headquarters in Virginia. There, NMAC will return the "trash" to the polluter.

Environmentalists often are accused of lacking a sense of humor. Not so with the folks at NMAC, who, along with CDs, collect original haikus on the subject of AOL and junk mail. (A haiku is a Japanese poem of three lines, consisting of five, seven, and five syllables.) EVST students contributed a plethora of haikus this semester. Here is a sample:

*AOL's dirty hook
Wasted resources at work
Wish you'd sent a book*

*More wasted plastic
Shove 'em where the sun don't shine!
Fry in corporate hell!*

*There are lots of these
Somewhere in my apartment.
I only found one.*

For more info, visit the campaign website at www.nomoreaolcds.com.

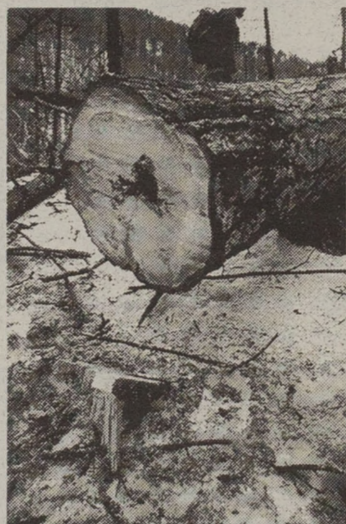
—Derek Goldman

GLOBAL JAS 2002

To focus attention on the upcoming G8 meetings, a Missoula-based, grassroots coalition organized the Global Justice Action Summit (GlobalJAS). This international forum-fair-festival will be held in Missoula, Montana, from June 20-24, 2002, just prior to the June 26-27 G8 meetings in Kananaskis, Alberta.

GlobalJAS is organized under the belief that a global sustainable economy is achievable through local sustainable agricultural, labor, environmental, and business practices. The summit will consist of action workshops, seminars, and speakers that address topics such as grassroots democracy; human, indigenous, and labor rights; economic and social justice; and democratic representation in international decision-making. Its participants will draft a declaration, which will be presented to the G8, that upholds a socially, environmentally, and economically responsible expectation of globalization. The declaration and gathering of GlobalJAS will address the integrity of the G8 and the global influence that trickles down from its decisions. For details, to register, or to contribute to the GlobalJAS declaration, log onto www.globaljas.org.

—Angela Barger



Live tree on BNF

photo courtesy of Wild Rockies EarthFirst

BITTERROOT BURN

While wildfires instantly strike fear in many Americans, they are a natural and beneficial part of forest ecosystems. During the summer of 2000, fires raged throughout the Bitterroot Valley of northwestern Montana, sparking a series of precedent-setting actions by the government and environmental activists.

In May 2001, the Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) published its Draft Burned Area Recovery Plan, which called for salvage logging and mechanical thinning of 280 million board feet of timber from over 79,000 acres of forestland. BNF

officials concluded that timber removal was the best way to restore the burned forests, and United States Forest Service officials began an intense campaign to garner support for the proposal.

Noting that there is no peer-reviewed scientific evidence to support the claim that logging is ecologically beneficial in post-fire forests, local conservation groups initiated a campaign to stop the plan. Thanks to their efforts and over 4,000 public comments, the BNF was pressured to revise its numbers. Published on October 10, 2001, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) called for 181 million board feet to be cut over 46,000 acres—which still meant that more timber would be cut in the BNF than in the past 15 years combined. Over half of the timber would come from roadless areas.

Many citizens and nonprofits, still dissatisfied with the new proposal, sent in a second round of comments and vowed to appeal an unfavorable final decision. But Dale Bosworth, Chief of the Forest Service, placed decision-making authority for the plan in the hands of Undersecretary of Agriculture Mark Rey, illegally circumventing the appeals process. A number of groups, including Friends of the Bitterroot, the Sierra Club, and the Wilderness Society, filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of Rey's authority. On January 7, 2002, Federal District Judge Donald Molloy, citing that the Forest Service had elected "to take the law into its own hands," granted an injunction to halt the salvage sales sanctioned by Rey. The Forest Service appealed to Judge Molloy to let 5,000 acres of the sale go through, arguing that these sales needed to be implemented immediately in order to take advantage of seasonal conditions favorable for logging. To avoid endless legal wrangling, Molloy ordered both sides into mediation.

Two days of negotiations resulted in an agreement, calling for logging 60 million board feet on over 14,000 acres of post-fire forests, that was signed by all parties on February 7, 2002. While the plaintiffs managed to secure the short-term protection of roadless areas and

sensitive watersheds, it should be noted that the Forest Service still can repropose these sales, providing they submit new EISs in the future.

Critics of the agreement point out that all interested parties who wished to appeal the BNF's plan were not included in the mediation and argue that the plaintiffs had a solid enough case to have won the lawsuit outright. The plaintiffs managed to stop a salvage sale unparalleled in scope yet agreed to a logging plan that is more than seven times the annual timber cut from the BNF in the past decade. For many, this compromise is difficult to stomach.

No one knows for sure what kind of long-term damage will result from such a large salvage sale in this sensitive, post-fire environment. Monitored violations to date, which include the illegal cutting of live, old-growth ponderosa pines, offer environmentalists little hope that the sales will be performed with "forest health" as a primary consideration. Activists can hope only that their actions in response to the fires of 2000 in the BNF will impede future dubious sales. Only then will the Forest Service begin to look for positive ways to restore these ecosystems without extractive strings attached.

—Frederick Smith

TREES FOR THE PEOPLE

In the century since the establishment of large, national land preserves characteristic of the West, there have been sporadic, and thus far largely unsuccessful, efforts to localize their control. From the overtly aggressive and anti-Federal hot spots of the Sagebrush Rebellion to the emergence of collaborative, citizen-based oversight groups, the crux of the problem is the difficulty of squaring local concerns and management priorities with those on the national level. The Bush Administration is weighing in from the federal side of the equation in favor of ceding some governance to locally-based groups.

The Department of Agriculture's Fiscal Year 2003 budget, released in January, includes a provision calling for the establishment of pilot "charter forests." Lands in this new administrative category would be carved out of existing Forest

Service holdings in the West. The provision directs the Department of Agriculture to accept proposals from collaborative groups that want to administer the new forests and to evaluate the bids based on such criteria as broad-based representation of stakeholders within the group, soundness of the management plan, and economic feasibility.



GlobalJAS logo

According to the proposal, the program represents an effort to "streamline the decision-making process" that can hold management directives in a public review limbo. The hastening of decisions about public lands stands out to many in the environmental community as a play to expedite public lands access for extractive industries. Environmental groups have long depended on federal administration of public lands and federal legislation such as the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act to hold managers accountable for the ecological health of those lands. The fact that this proposal comes out of the Bush administration, not widely recognized as formulating a progressive environmental stance, reinforces the view that the effects of localizing control would directly benefit industry. Environmental directives put in motion by previous administrations, the Roadless Rule being a prime example, have seen consistent undermining by Bush appointees.

The litmus test on charter forests will be whether the administration actually prioritizes even representation of stakeholders, including representation of the ecological needs of the forest, on the management panels. The implementation of any new management body on federal lands is subject to the approval of Congress. With the Senate now tipped slightly in Democratic favor, charter forests will have to virtually shine with the polish of balance, reason, and the promise of the public interest if they are to make it from the realm of the possible to "on

the ground" actuality. This is a development of far-reaching implications for the nature of the West and bears close watching.

—John Bateman

ENDANGERED FORESTS

In September 2001, the National Forest Protection Alliance (NFPA) released its biannual report highlighting 10 national forests and the threats imposed on them primarily from extractive industries like logging, mining, and oil and gas development. The purpose of the *10 Most Endangered National Forests Report* is to raise public awareness of these threats and to encourage individuals to get involved in public land issues regarding our national forests. NFPA states, "Most Americans are shocked to learn that each year the US Forest Service subsidizes the timber industry to log and thin roughly 750,000 acres of our national forests, at a net loss to US taxpayers of over \$1.3 billion annually." Logging alone appears to be formidable threat to our forest ecosystems; throw oil and gas development, mining, and grazing into the mix, and you might begin to wonder who really owns these forests.

NFPA's mission is to end commercial exploitation of US public lands and to initiate a restorative program to reverse the damage done to those lands through our nation's history of resource extraction. The report highlights special issues relevant to all national forests, such as fire, the Roadless Rule, and land exchanges. Each endangered forest profile includes a physical description, a summary of threats, statements about each risk, and a section on species concerns. NFPA also provides specifics on what can be done to remove the threats.

Forests highlighted in 2001's Report include the Tongass in Alaska, the Black Hills in South Dakota and Wyoming, and the Umpqua in Oregon. The report also includes summaries of 17 national forests considered threatened by NFPA, including the Bitterroot and the Kootenai National Forests here in Montana.

To obtain a copy of 2001's report, or to nominate a national forest in your area for the 2003 report, contact NFPA at nfpa@wildrockies.org; or check out the website at www.forestadvocate.org.

—Danielle Lattuga

P I N I N G F O R C O T T O N W O O D S

Before native sense returned me to Montana, I was beached for several seasons in the San Juan Islands of Puget Sound. It was an uneasy residence—a temporary one, I knew—but I was held in thrall by the exotic density of coastal life and by the fact that I was learning a trade, carpentry.

An approximate couple with a pair of small daughters, my wife and I had fled Montana for the usual reasons: penury, a flailing marriage, a typically American westering instinct, and possession of a suitable vehicle. I had failed as a schoolteacher and as a white-collar minion of the state. I had breezily left ranch and construction laborer jobs, and I believed I could find more rewarding work than I had during my recent appointment at the university golf course, where I was paid \$1.75 an hour to ride a mower around the fairways in a cloud of dope smoke.

We loaded our oxidized-orange, highway department crew “crummy” with everything we owned. With a treadle sewing machine strapped to the top, we looked like the Joads heading for California. We said an extended goodbye to Montana with an August camping trip where, savoring our lack of employment, we walked and dreamed. We swam in Glacier Park’s Lake McDonald and in the Big Blackfoot River. We learned to cook illicit grouse in a Dutch oven, buried in a fire-lined hole in the ground. We cowered in the crummy to watch bears snuffle through our supper remains.

The westering drive and a need for money pushed us into the orchards of the Okanagan Valley of central Washington in time for the September apple harvest. Recognizing that we needed to work together to finance further travel toward a new chance, my wife and I cultivated a careful tolerance for each other. The civility lasted through the

harvest and the remaining 200 miles to the edge of Puget Sound, crumbling quickly upon our arrival. Alone, I headed still farther west to Lummi Island.

To me, a child of the arid West, the rampant greenery of coastal lands and the abounding life of the Sound were initially intriguing. Everything seemed edible. I joined the locals in foraging parties into the woods and on the waters. In the middle of the night, we plucked clams from flats bared by low midwinter tides, our stooped figures lit by kerosene lanterns,

reminiscent of dim Dutch paintings. After the tide washed back in to cover the flats, we hurried to steam our catch, savoring the liquor in the bottom of the pot, snorting the shucked clams.

From a rowboat, we tended crab pots set 50 yards off shore, baited with punctured cans of dog food. On summer nights, we scarfed blackberry pies and freshly caught rock cod, quickly fried. Seasonally, we gathered wild onions, lingon berries, salmon berries, oyster and morel mushrooms, cattails, nettles. We plundered plum bushes and apple trees gone feral.

In the early ‘70s, before the depletion of wild salmon caused the severe curtailment of fishing, it was possible to buy brilliantly fleshed sockeye salmon off the commercial gill net boats when they returned from a night of fishing. Eating such creatures, after soaking them overnight in a mild brine and cooking them the livelong day in the cool

smoke of an alder fire, was akin to prayer.

I looked to the open expanses of salt water and the pebbled beaches for the wildness I longed for. I saw my first harlequin duck. Lounging on the pebble beach, I once watched an otter roll out of the tide line to stash a rock cod behind a driftwood log. Blackbirds returned in January, and great snowy owls visited some years.

Pods of killer whales, or Orcas, were a common sight from the shore of Lummi. One night, working on a commercial



BY ARCHIE McMILLAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIELLE GARDNER

fishing boat with a half-mile of gill net strung behind, the net glowing with phosphorescence, I heard powerful breathing from creatures that surrounded the boat—explosive, raspy breathing like the huffing of a steam locomotive. By starlight, we watched Orcas attempting to pick salmon from the net, jumping over the net, and breaching.

Most years, a storm blew spectacularly out of Canada. But the generally bland climate and the winters, with gray skies that seemed barely six feet overhead, were insufficient; I yearned for sharper air. I was not drawn to explore the nearly impenetrable second growth forests of alder and fir, devil's club, graspy blackberry bushes, nettles, as I had been to the sagebrush slopes and open pine forests of home. Having usually lived where I could reasonably walk away into wildness, I chafed at the strictures of an island from which the only escape was an hourly ferry to the mainland, a ferry that shut down altogether at midnight. Though I lived in a beautiful, fecund place, I felt physically trapped.

One spring afternoon, I knelt on the deck of a new house, nailing down planks, the house surrounded by dense woods. Above me, a sort of sky was visible as through a narrow green tunnel. A breeze blew the cries of gulls and cormorants from a nearby beach through the clearing. Leaves rustled. Leaves *clacked*. For the first time in years, I heard the distinctive clatter of the moving leaves of a solitary cottonwood, as seemingly mislaid as myself, surrounded by too much vegetation, a fellow refugee of the rivers and creeks of Montana. I needed those same waters. Open skies, cottonwoods, few jobs, meager pay beckoned. I returned to Montana with my new skills

and carpentry tools, a half-pint of Black Jack stashed under the seat of a 27-year-old Ford.

I know I must live near cottonwoods. I also know that I must live in a place dry enough that a handful of pine needles—ponderosa pine, yellow pine, bull pine, *Pinus ponderosa*—needles plucked from the litter beneath a vanilla-scented, 300-year-old tree, will start a campfire with the touch of a match. From my bedroom window, without lifting my head from the pillow, I now can see the sky above the mountain that is my backyard. I watch the bending tops of scattered ponderosas and their attendant magpies.

In the spring, I revel in the sweetly resinous scent of a sticky, newly green cottonwood leaf, in the exploded seed casings that drift underfoot like a skift of snow, in the clatter of breeze-blown leaves. I look forward to the first day each year when I will lay a sleeping bag under a cottonwood tree and sleep in the embrace of dry leaves, caressed by their susurrations each time I stir.

Archie McMillan writes from Missoula, where he grows indigenous and imported plants, sings bass, and recovers from a brace of bachelor's degrees.



Wild Life

Through the adolescent woods, amid
the fragrant shards of a new-shattered
cedar splayed by a twisting wind,
a young deer stands, drawing sun

into the tawn of his red flanks,
noticing me. I wait for the alarm of shock-
white tail and explosion of haunches
through brush, but now only a flicker of white,

a shuffling of hooves, he helicopters his
long stalked ears at a meaty fly
pestering his antler nubs. My reflection
in the moist brown pools of his eyes, his jaw works,

the grass hangs from his lips. I am
tired, lean on my walking stick and
pant, to show him. He cocks his head. Another
deer from behind a downed tree, sneezing.

One digs in his ear with a rear hoof,
a lanky tripod of quivering tendons, sniffs
and licks his toes. I clear my throat, which
interests them. They watch me a while, until

whether from boredom or hunger or some
other more senseless urge for movement,
I continue on my way, loop around their trail.
Their ears dish the satellite sounds

of my long new stride. I turn to see
if they are following just as my trail empties
onto an old dirt road. My stumbling startles
a chance jogger, here, miles outside of town

and with a flinch and a sharp sucking of breath
he scampers down the road. I watch
until I no longer hear the accelerated
patter of his shoes on the fine sandy gravel.

Nathan McKeen

These Streams

by Than Hitt

*B*efore I was born, I breathed water. Even now the air I breathe contains water vapor. My body is mostly water. And I must drink water—every day. These simple facts remind me that there is a deeper history to my life, a history I know best by stories of water. Let me explain.

On June 6, 1944, my grandfather dove into the ocean off the coast of France. He hadn't been far from home before, but now he was swimming for shore with one hand while holding his rifle above water with the other. He was swimming for Omaha Beach on D-Day. He would survive WWII, return home to West Virginia, and father two girls. My mother and I swam with him.

My grandfather's grandfather ran a flourmill in West Virginia. He harnessed the stream to turn a stone grinder on buckwheat. Bad whiskey killed him, as the legend goes, but water turned the mill that fed him and his family. Before this patriarch died, he left a living mark on the world: two sons and two daughters. My grandfather, my mother, and I witnessed that stone turn.

My grandfather's grandfather's parents were from northern Europe. I imagine that they were agriculturalists—cultivating plants, tending animals. They dug irrigation ditches and built earthen dams to control the flow of water to their fields, for without daily water there would be no daily bread.

My earlier ancestors from what is now Africa also knew water's value. They lived near open water when possible. They waited for rain. They traveled with the seasons of wet and dry. Their lives, as mine, depended on the clouds to feed the plants to feed the animals.

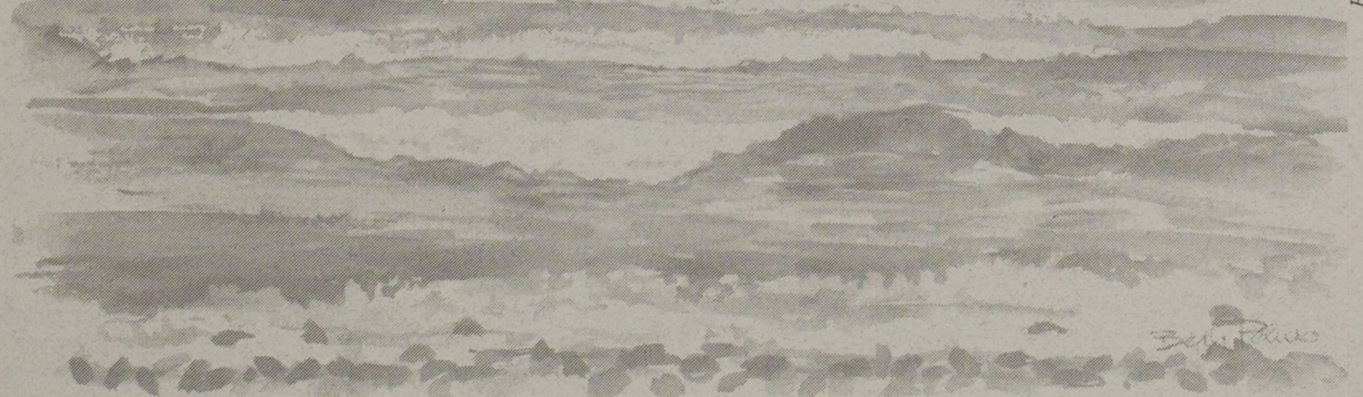
Humans and other mammals emerged from amphibians—organisms with aquatic and terrestrial histories. From the Triassic to the Permian periods, amphibians were some of the largest animals on Earth. Some grew to over six meters in length; they required water, not only for larval development, but also to breathe through their skin. In essence, these aquatic organisms packaged the sea into their bodies and carried it with them onto land. Even I am a sea creature.

But before these walking sacks of ocean had enough backbone to pioneer the land, they were powerless against the draw of oceanic currents. The early multicellular organisms could, however, manage the flow of water through their bodies, which allowed them to eat, grow, and reproduce.

All plants and animals emerged from single-celled organisms. In these earliest creatures, water was necessary to harness the energy stored in sugars. Even the production of these first foods required water. Water is one of the most basic fuels on the Earth.

My history is tied to these stories. The habitat template for evolution that tested my ancestors, it continues to test us now. How can we resist the water when we carry these streams within?

*Than Hitt is a graduate student studying aquatic ecology at The University of Montana. He would like to acknowledge David James Duncan, whose book, *My Story as Told by Water*, inspired this vignette.*



Beth Peluso

feature

Our Good Fortune

Note: On the last day of November, 2001, a group of conservationists, writers, and thinkers gathered at the Boone & Crockett Club in Missoula, Montana, to discuss what, if anything, had changed in their lives in light of 9-11-01 and the ensuing American military response. Three of those present were asked to speak before the gathering opened to discussion. These were David James Duncan's remarks. The works of Wendell Berry and Brian Doyle are used with permission.

Anybody in this room could start rambling about the last two months of his life and launch us on a fruitful discussion. I feel sheepish that I'm the one serving this modest purpose—sheepish to be talking at all, let alone to better minds. I'd rather be listening. That said, I was asked, so I'll talk.

As I see it, we're all in a kiln, midway through a firing. We're all raw clay, as human beings have always been, but we're feeling more acutely, since 9-11, the heat of transformation.

One thought I keep having: Thank God Americans are finally feeling *something*. The consumer coma that's been

Photographs by Jay Ericson



destroying so much of the world looked to me like it was going to last forever. I sense some consciousness where the coma used to be.

A question that haunts me: What are we being transformed into?

Another: Do we have any say in what we're being transformed into or any power to guide the firing process?

Another: What is the best stance to take, what do we do with our bodies, minds, and spirits while enduring the heat of the kiln?

A first set of thoughts:

I tried to fly to New York two weeks ago, the same day 270 people died in a New York jet crash. JFK, my destination, closed as I was boarding in Missoula. I found a TV, saw burning buildings and closed airports, gave up, drove home, took a long nap. I was awakened by my travel agent, saying he'd booked me the last seat on an evening flight to La Guardia, which had just reopened. When I left again for the airport, it was the first time in all my

travels that my 11-year-old daughter wept in fear and begged me not to go. Leaving for New York anyway was as close as I've come to any sort of war against terror. I called my daughter before dashing onto the plane; her courage had returned: the first skirmish had been won.

I'd never flown due east out of Missoula on a clear evening. The world below was so beautiful I felt as if I'd died and was seeing a hereafter in the here. I saw my house, tiny beside Lolo Creek. The creek, then the Bitterroot, then Rock Creek, turned to quicksilver in the late sunlight. The pilot had a voice like Mr. Rogers. I used his voice, and Jonathan Franzen's gruesomely funny new novel, to get across the continent without fear, but I upped the ante to two red wines and prayer as we glided into New York. The night air was so clear, and Manhattan so lit up and beautiful, that I felt again as if I'd died and was landing in what E.L. Doctorow's last novel calls the "City of God."

In God's city, sure enough, the twin towers had been removed.

But we landed safely. My luggage even made it. I caught a cab into the city, looked out the window.

by David James Duncan

E.L. Doctorow, *City of God*:

"Every scruffy, oversize, undersize, weird, fat, or bony or limping or muttering or foreign-looking, or green-haired punk-strutting, threatening, crazy, angry, inconsolable person I see... is a New Yorker, which is to say as native to this diaspora as I am, and part of our great sputtering experiment in a universalist society proposing a world without nations where anyone can be anything and the ID is planetary."

William Kittredge, *The Nature of Generosity*:

"I sauntered (a la Whitman) down Broadway toward Prince Street in Manhattan's SoHo district and was struck by happiness. The streets were crowded by people seeming to represent every racial mix and continent and subcontinent, many of them speaking in tongues, as far as I could tell, sometimes singing in any one of a multitude of languages I couldn't place. So much humanity, with the old boy, myself, idling among them in the maze of ornate brick-work walls.... All the stories in the world surround us. We all have to deal with the run of metaphor loose near Broadway and Prince. It's possible to think of this as our good fortune."

A second set of thoughts:
All the stories in the world surround us. Not just America's stories. The World Trade Center victims were international and consisted of Muslim country citizens as well as Americans. My own current novel attempts, lifelong friendships, and inner life also connect directly to stories and people in parts of the world many Americans now want to demonize in order to wage guilt-free war. My son's middle name, for example, is Faredoon, after an ancient Persian king and a heroic modern Maharashtra India friend.

More examples: Two of my close friends for 30 years have been Carl and Judith Ernst. They were married on an Oregon farm I care took in '74. I caught, cooked, and fed them fresh trout on their wedding night. (Carl was apparently a bit jittery about his upcoming nuptials: he upchucked the trout.) He is now the mainstay of the Islamic Studies department at University of North Carolina (UNC). A completely unpretentious man, he's fluent in six languages, including Arabic and Persian; has become one of the West's leading scholars on Sufism; has six brilliant books to his credit—so it's nice for a monolingual peasant like me to recall that, when I met Carl in the '70s, he had an evening jones for a horrid beer called Brown Derby, which he'd quaff, then go, "Ahhhh!

Tastes like a Brown Derby." He and Judy and their daughters lived for years in Pakistan, spent another year in India, and are now in Spain on a teaching sabbatical having to do, I think, with Andalusian Sufis. Carl and his Islamic Studies colleagues at UNC have received thousands of phone calls and emails from media people since 9-11, begging for insight into the Islamic worldview before our ignorance kills us.

Another example: Jay Bonner. I met Jay in Palo Alto in '73, via mutual friends we'd both hitchhiked to see at Stanford. We played a little Celtic music and ping-pong together, somehow parlayed that into friendship, and while I moved on to mowing Oregon lawns and writing my first novel, Jay moved to London to attend the Royal College of Art. There he proved to be a genius at Islamic geometric design, tile work, and architecture, and he also fell in love

with a displaced Indian Parsi, Shireen Irani, with whom he now has a family in Santa Fe. In the late '80s, Jay was hired to design six enormous outdoor domes for the vast pilgrimage center at Mecca—a project in some ways comparable, strange to say, to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. Jay's domes are gorgeous, and they are innovative despite the strictures of tradition. I reckon I'm the only hick in Lolo, Montana, with a close friend whose work shields literally millions of Muslim pilgrims each year from the desert sun. Jay has many other Islamic projects to his credit, too, including, last year, a hospital I'd wager is the most beautiful in the world.

Because of Carl, Jay, their families, knowledge, lives, their Muslim friends, I take it badly when I hear some media lordling such as CBS's Dan Rather, when asked by Larry King why the Muslim world hates America, respond, "Because we're winners and they're losers. And because some people are simply evil." On the contrary, Dan, *all the stories in the world surround us. And it's not only possible, it's a necessity, to think of this as our good fortune.*

Third set of thoughts:

The best response I've seen to the new war remains Wendell Berry's essay, written September 13, 2001, called "Thoughts in the Presence of Fear." It's been reprinted in some 200 publications and 20 languages. Since I've seen no clearer statement, I'm going to review some of it for its profound sense of direction. The essay is a list of 27 connected thoughts. Here are a few:

I. "The time will soon come when we will not be able to remember the horrors of 9-11 without remembering also the unquestioning technological and economic optimism that ended on that day."

II. "This optimism rested on the proposition that we were living in a 'new world order' and 'new economy' that would 'grow' on and on, bringing a prosperity that would be 'unprecedented.'"

III. "The dominant politicians, corporate officers, and investors who believed this did not acknowledge that the prosperity was limited to a tiny percent of the world's people and to an ever smaller number of people even in the United States; that it was founded upon the oppressive labor of poor people all over the world; and that its ecological costs increasingly threatened all life, including the lives of the supposedly prosperous."

IV. "The 'developed nations' had given the 'free market' the status of a god and were sacrificing to it their farmers, farmlands, and communities; their forests, wetlands, and prairies; their ecosystems and watersheds. They had accepted universal pollution and global warming as normal costs of doing business."

Skipping ahead and condensing VII through X: We did not anticipate anything like what now has happened. We did not foresee that all our innovations at once might be overridden by a kind of war that would trap us in the webwork of communication and transport that was supposed to make us free. Nor did we foresee that the weaponry and war science we marketed and taught to the world would become available, not just to recognized national governments, but also to dissident or fanatical groups and individuals whose violence, though never worse than that of nations, is judged by the nations to be illegitimate. We had accepted uncritically the belief that technology is only good and cannot serve our enemies the corollary belief that an economy that is global and technologically complex is protectable by "national defense."

XI. "We now have a clear, inescapable choice.... We can continue to promote a global economic system of unlimited 'free trade' among corporations, held together by long and highly

vulnerable lines of communication and supply but now recognizing that such a system will have to be protected by a hugely expensive police force that...will be effective precisely to the extent that it overweighs the freedom and privacy of the citizens of every nation."

XII. "Or we can promote a decentralized world economy that will have the aim of assuring to every nation and region a local self-sufficiency in life-supporting goods. This would not eliminate international trade, but it would tend toward a trade in surpluses after local needs had been met."

XIII through XV. A danger second only to further terrorist attacks is that we will attempt to go on as before with the corporate program of global "free trade," whatever the cost in freedom and civil rights, without self-questioning or self-criticism or public debate. The talk we are hearing from politicians, bureaucrats, and commentators so far has tended to reduce complex problems to issues of national unity, security, normality, and retaliation. National self-righteousness, like personal self-righteousness, is a mistake. It is misleading. It's a sign of weakness. We are not innocent of making war against civilian populations.

Fourth set of thoughts, regarding Berry's reference to war on civilians:

My first published response to 9-11 was a brief essay, published on the same Orion website as Wendell's piece, called "A Prayer for Children and Water." A portion of that essay:

"In 1991, in the wake of Desert Storm, the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) researched what the effect would be of bombing the water storage systems and sewage treatment systems of Iraq till they were destroyed. An American journalist, Thomas Nagy, has investigated the DIA documents. They were declassified in 1995. Nagy has written several articles about what he discovered. No major media or magazines have shown interest. I can see why: like the first whispers we once heard of the massacre at My Lai, they're almost too shameful to believe. The article I'll be citing was in the September 2001 Progressive. The documents quoted and paraphrased are all available online. Nagy's conclusions are his own, but he's not pushy: he tells how to access the documents so you can draw your own conclusions.

"The 1991 DIA documents, to my amazement as a water guardian, go into great technical detail about the sources and quality of Iraq's water; they note that Iraqi rivers contain biological material and pollutants that, unless treated with chlorine, cause epidemic diseases like cholera, hepatitis, and typhoid. The documents note that chlorine was embargoed by the sanctions, as were food, all other drinkable liquids, and medicine. The documents predict that, if Iraq's water systems are destroyed, it is poor Iraqis, especially children, who will be affected—not Saddam Hussein. Knowing this, our political and military leaders under the elder George Bush—in defiance of the Geneva Convention—systematically destroyed the water and sewage systems of Iraq anyway. The sanctions on chlorine and medicine remained in place.

"The DIA documents continue: They mention epidemic outbreaks of acute diarrhea, dysentery, respiratory ailments, measles, diphtheria, pertussis, meningitis, and other diseases, again and again causing problems—most notably death—for



children. One document describes a refugee camp in which 80 percent of the population has come down with diarrhea, cholera, hepatitis B, measles, gastroenteritis. It reports that 80 percent of the resulting dead are children.

"When, in the mid-'90s, a team of Harvard doctors witnessed the epidemics and urged that sanctions barring medicine be lifted, our Defense Intelligence responded by saying that the Iraqi regime was exaggerating the incidence of disease for political purposes. The sanctions and fouled water remained in place. They remain in place to this day. The United Nations—not some Iraqi propagandist, the U.N.—now reports that 500,000 Iraqi children age five and under have died as a result and that 5000 more infants and children will continue to die each month until medicine and safe water are restored.

"We all know children under five. How political are they? How pro- or anti-Bush or Saddam? How Islamic or Christian? Aren't they just children? What is a terrorist? What is terror? Is there a greater terror than watching your child die before your eyes? Even with the best medicine available, I've wrestled sheer terror, tending my feverish children through the night, when the thermometer hit 105. And when they've entered convulsions, how well I remember the desperate cure: cold, clean water. I try to imagine tending my child with no medicine as 78 percent of her body and 90 percent of her brain become water deliberately defiled by America's leaders. I try to imagine myself having nothing with which to cool her but cloths dampened with ruined water. I try to imagine singing to her inert body, then putting away, forever, her abandoned clothes, toys, shoes, as I try, in the Name of the Compassionate, the Merciful, to forgive her killers. My mind balks. What is a terrorist but an inflictor of pain and terror? Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell, in the interests of our 'defense,' again and again agree that the sanctions are working and that the cost is 'worth it.' One and a quarter billion Muslims know this. Some are insane with rage as a result. Now 3000 of us—far less than a month's worth of sanctioned-to-death children—have been denied life. Americans are furious in turn. So bombs are falling, civil liberties are vanishing, Pakistan is boiling, India is heating up, Pakistan and India have impossible tensions, Pakistan and India have nukes. And 5000 more infants and children will die this month for the crime of being born to mothers who have done nothing but suffer under the rule of an Iraqi leader whom the U.S. empowered in the first place.

"This is a war against evil," says George W. Bush—who in May 2001 gave \$43 million to the Taliban knowing they bury women alive, then in September 2001 posed beside newspaper headlines reading 'BUSH GOES AFTER THE TERRORISTS' MONEY.' If Bush is right, if this is truly 'a war against evil,' then God help us. On the basis of simple love for my own and all children, my own and all living waters, and my own and all personal freedom, I believe the sanctions are child-killing

insanity that recklessly endanger us all. Only a servant of what Dr. King called 'the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism' could justify such a cost."

Fifth set of thoughts:

A fine friend, Portland writer Brian Doyle, sent me an essay that, though anything but scholarly, was published in a recent issue of *American Scholar*. I don't know if it's fair to call Iraqi children and the Twin Tower victims direct cause and effect, but it's certainly fair to call them Islamic and Western flesh, blood and innocence annihilated by ruthlessness. Here's a bit of Brian's essay, which is called "Leap":

"A couple leaped from the south tower, hand in hand. They reached for each other and their hands met and they jumped. Jennifer Brickhouse saw them falling, hand in hand.

"Many people jumped. Perhaps hundreds. No one knows. They struck the pavement with such force that there was a pink mist in the air.

"The mayor reported the mist.

"A kindergarten boy who saw tiny people falling in flames

told his teacher the birds were on fire. She ran with him on her shoulders out of the ashes.

"Tiffany Keeling saw fireballs falling that she later realized were people. Jennifer Griffin saw people falling and wept as she told the story. Niko Winstral saw people free-falling backwards with their hands out for balance, as if parachuting. Joe Duncan on his roof on Duane Street looked up and saw people jumping. Henry Weintraub saw people 'kicking as they flew out.' John Carson saw six people 'falling over themselves, falling, they were somersaulting.' Steve Miller saw people jumping from a thousand feet in the air. Kirk Kjeldsen saw people flailing on the way down, people lining up and jumping, 'too many people falling.' Jane Tedder saw people leaping and the sight haunts her at night. Steve Tamas counted 14 people jumping, then he stopped counting. Several onlookers were killed by people falling from the sky. A fireman was killed by a body falling from the sky. Stuart DeHann saw one woman's dress billowing as she fell, and he saw a shirtless man falling end over end, and he too saw the couple leap and fall hand in hand....

"No one knows who they were: husband and wife, lovers, dear friends, colleagues, strangers thrown together at the window there at the lip of hell. Maybe they didn't even reach for each other consciously, maybe it was a reflex as they decided at the same time to take two running steps and jump out the shattered window. But John the Apostle wrote love casteth out fear and they did reach for each other, and leaped, and held on tight, falling endlessly into the smoking canyon, 200 miles an hour, falling so far so fast they may have blacked out before they hit the pavement near Liberty Street so hard there was pink mist in the air.... Jennifer Brickhouse saw them holding hands, and Stuart DeHann saw them holding hands, and I hold on to that."

*Thank God Americans
are finally feeling
something.... I sense
some consciousness where
the coma used to be.*

Final set of thoughts:

"I went down to the river to pray, studyin' about the good ol' Way

"An' who shall wear that starry crown, Lord, show me the way."

Martin Luther King, Jr., Riverside Church, New York City, 1967:

"A time comes when silence is betrayal.... Men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war.... We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness so close around us.... We are called upon to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation, for those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers."

I hold on, not only to the held hands of the leaping couple and to my Americanness, but to the ideals of assassinated Americans like Dr. King and to the Islamic friends of lifelong American friends. I hold on to Gandhi's insistence even to the Hindus who murdered him that he was Muslim and Christian as well as Hindu. I hold on to the millions of pilgrims shaded by my friend Jay's domes; to the encounters my friend Carl has had with marvelous people at the tombs of Rumi, Hafiz, and others; to the poems of the same poets; and to my fair-skinned son's dark-skinned namesake, Faredoon. The landless people of Palestine, dying children of Iraq, puppet governments, fascist dictators, hideous trade practices, hideous foreign policy, and military coups the U.S. has facilitated, armed, and defended now endanger us so forthrightly that it's making our leaders' denial-filled heads spin like tops, cf. "BUSH GOES AFTER THE TERRORISTS' MONEY."



"Problems cannot be solved," said Albert Einstein, *"at the same level of consciousness that created them."* I pray that half a million dead infants and children, 3000 dead New Yorkers, and the spirit of Dr. King can lift our consciousness to a new level. *"We are called upon to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation, for those it calls enemy."* One power I possess to win a war against evil and terrorism, and so defend those I love, is to refuse to inflict evil or terror myself. How many photos of dead firemen must we contemplate before we begin to truly honor them—by carrying water the way firemen, clouds, and rivers do, to anyone and everyone who'll die without it?

Wendell Berry:

"The aim and result of war is not peace, but victory won by violence.... What leads to peace is peaceableness, which is not passivity, but an alert, informed, practiced, active state of being.... We have extravagantly subsidized the means of war but neglected the ways of peaceableness.... We have ignored the examples of Christ, Gandhi, Martin Luther King.... It is wrong to suppose we can exploit and impoverish poorer countries, while arming them and instructing them in the newest means of war; then reasonably expect them to be peaceable.... Starting with the economies of food and farming, we should promote at home, and encourage abroad, the ideal of local self-sufficiency, recognizing that this is the surest, safest, cheapest way for the world to live. We should not countenance the loss or destruction of any local capacity to produce necessary goods. We should renew and extend our efforts to protect the natural foundations of all human economies: the soil, water and air. We should protect every intact ecosystem and watershed left, and begin restoration of those damaged.... We cannot spend and consume endlessly. An economy based on waste is inherently and hopelessly violent, and war is its inevitable by-product. We need a peaceable economy."

Jennifer Brickhouse and Stuart DeHann saw them holding hands as they fell. The kindergartner reported the flaming birds, the mayor the pink mist, the U.N. the half-million dead children. *All the stories in the world surround us.* We're in a kiln with India, Pakistan, Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Mobil, Shell, and Exxon. Even if we've no power to guide the firing, we have the power to think infinitely more clearly and compassionately than Dan Rather, power to empathize, power to consume less, and power to consume more peaceably. We have the power of our voices, power of prayer, power of our united stories.

It's still possible to think of this as our good fortune.

David James Duncan is author of the novels *The River Why* (1983) and *The Brothers K* (1993) and the collection of stories and memoir, *River Teeth* (1995). His essays have appeared in magazines such as *Orion*, *Harper's*, *Big Sky Journal*, and *The Drake*. His most recent work, the nonfiction collection *My Story as Told by Water* (2001), was nominated for the National Book Award. This is his second contribution to Camas.

Untitled

A thunderbolt shattered
the clear, blue sky;
our reverie

Hearts stopped, ears rang
How close was the lightning?

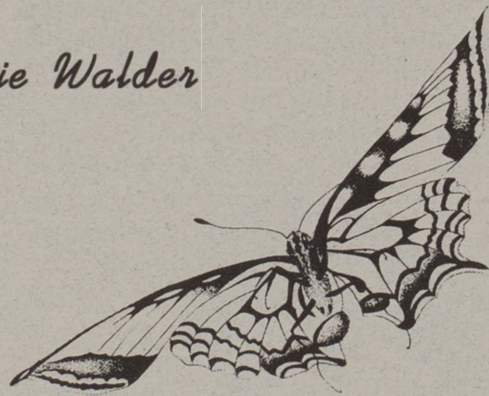
But thunder was an F-16
drowning the roar of Meadow Creek in flood

Outraged, helpless, we hiked on

A second thunderbolt; F-16:
closer, faster, louder...
inside this secluded, wild,
sacred canyon

Petal by petal, serviceberry flowers
drift earthward:
The air's own tears,
weeping from her violation

Bethanie Walder



Eugene Beckes

CHAMBERS

BY CLARA SOPHIA

Driving by on the main road to the University of California, Santa Cruz campus, you'd never know that just to the west was an old quarry, a granite and dirt bowl scooped out of the grass-covered hills. If you happened to be getting to campus via the bike path you'd see a scattering of trailers and temporary buildings in the bottom, looking like tiny monopoly pieces from your vantage at the top of a ridge. Few people know that this innocuous cluster was the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, the west coast center for peregrine falcon reintroduction, or that the buildings house both endangered birds and researchers completely dedicated to making sure peregrines don't vanish from the skies over California.

I parked my Datsun 210 next to a couple of beat-up Toyota trucks and, taking a deep breath, made my way up the three stairs of the wood deck at the front of the building. I entered a cramped entrance hall, which only seemed to connect the rooms in the building with the door. A woman behind the desk in the room on my right raised her head.

"I'm here for an interview with Lee Aulman. Am I in the right place?" I asked.

"Just a minute." She pressed a button on her phone and spoke into it. "Someone to see you," she said. I stood awkwardly in the doorway until a wiry blond man appeared at the end of the tiny hall.

"I'm Lee," he said. "C'mon back here." I took three steps into a back room crammed with two desks, bookshelves, and file drawers. Piles of papers and books were everywhere. The windows looked out on the rocky dirt of the quarry. On

the walls were a series of maps—California, Oregon, Washington—and a riot of photos: a cliff-face, falcons, eagles, close-ups of nests and eggs and piles of what looked like feathers.

"Here, have a seat." He moved a sheaf of file folders off a chair, and I sat down. Lee sat at his desk. "So, you want to be a hack attendant?" he said and looked sharply at me.

"Yes," I said. I was nervous. I'd been a musician, a Santa Cruz Bohemian, working in coffeehouses, restaurants, and boutiques while rehearsing at night. Now I was back in school, working on my undergraduate degree at a community college. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But I'd always been good at biology. In high school, my friend and I would study together at her house the afternoon before a test, then I'd sleep over, and we'd giggle into the night. The next morning we'd take the test, and I'd get As, and she'd get Cs.

"And you know Rob Ramey," Lee said, looking at some papers on his desk—my job application, I assumed.

"Yes. We have a mutual friend, and that's how I met him."

"He's a great guy. He's done some really good work for us," Lee said. "So what do you know about peregrines?"

"Nothing," I replied, because I didn't. "I don't really know about birds at all. But I'm thinking about a degree in wildlife biology, and I thought I better get some hands-on experience to see if I liked it. Rob is the only person I know who does this kind of work, and he recommended you, so here I am. I have rock climbing experience, I love being outdoors, but I don't know anything about birds."

Lee glanced at me. "Hmmm," he said and looked again at my application. I looked at his desk. Piles of papers. Rolls of maps. Pens; paper clips; and, stuck in the spaces between books, all along the window ledge, and even behind some of the photos on the wall, feathers of all kinds. Later, I found out that this was a game that Lee played with everyone at the Bird Group. He'd find a feather in the field and pull it out later



WEYGANDT

and say: What is it? If you were good, you could I.D. the bird and the kind of feather: primary, secondary, tail. The man who analyzed the prey remains from peregrine nests had near-legendary abilities and could supposedly tell the sex, age, and species of a bird from a single feather.

Lee looked up. "To be honest with you, for this kind of work," he flicked his fingers against the application in his hand, "you don't need to know about birds. You just need to stay. It's hard—12-, 16-hour days, all sorts of weather. It can be really boring, but we need you there. You live at the site, and everything you do is around those birds. If you are at a site, you are at the site. You can't decide you can't take it anymore and quit. Once you are in, that's it. This is not just a job. You are the parent to those young birds. They need you. They can't make it without you. You need to stay for however long it takes for them to mature and disperse." He glared at me from his hawk-like eyes, and I felt like a mouse caught out in the open.

"I understand that," I said, "and if I decide to do it, I'll stay. I have a question, though."

"Yes?"

"Why is the job for a 'hack' attendant? What does that mean?"

Lee nodded, like this was something he was used to answering. "It refers to a board. In medieval times, when a falconer was training a young hawk, he would put food out for the birds on a light-colored board, so the young would see it more readily and then fly in and feed. The board itself was known as a hack board. It's actually a dialect variant on the word 'hatch,' which in those times referred to one of those doors, the ones that have a top and a bottom that open separately. When young birds were in the process of learning how to fly and hunt on their own but still being fed by a falconer, they were said to be 'at hack.' We've used a lot of the same techniques in designing our reintroduction strategy, and that's why we use that term to refer to a site where human attendants are the surrogate parents. It's an homage to falconry and the contributions that it's made to this effort. Now," he continued, "we can teach you everything you need

to know. The main thing is that you stay at the site, that you stay the course. It does get easier as time goes on, but you really need to stay for the entire site. That can be for six to eight weeks."

"Why six to eight weeks; why the difference?" I asked.

"The females mature more slowly than the males, and, depending on the different sexes that are being released, you may have to stay longer."

"Oh. Well, if you want to teach me, I can learn. And, as I said, if I decide to do it, I'll stay."

We looked at each other for a minute, Lee, I'm sure, trying to see if I was bullshitting, me trying to look sincere. The fact that I was sincere helped.

"Okay," he said, tilting his chair forward with a little bang and standing abruptly, "would you like to see the birds?"

"Sure," I said, getting up. I wasn't certain what the "okay" was about. Did that mean I was

hired? Did it mean he was still thinking about hiring me and was taking me to the next phase of the interview? I had no idea, but I wanted to see a peregrine, so I agreed.

I followed Lee through the tiny hall, onto the deck, down the stairs and crunched across the gravel parking lot toward the big, warehouse-looking building. There was a door facing us, but Lee continued along a dirt path along the side of the building to the back.

"These are the chambers." He waved at the wall we were passing. "It's where we keep the breeding adults and the young that are going to be going to hack or cross-foster sites."

"What's a cross-foster site?" I asked. We'd reached another door at the back corner of the building, and Lee stopped.

"At a cross-foster site, we put peregrine chicks into a wild prairie falcon nest. Prairie falcons aren't endangered, but they are closely related to peregrines. We climb into a prairie nest, remove the chicks, and replace them with peregrine chicks. The female raises them as if they were her original chicks."

ARTWORK BY ANYA ILLES

"What happens to her young? The ones you took out?"

"We move them to a prairie nest that doesn't have many young. When possible, we try to foster them near their birth site. A lot depends on how many peregrine eggs we have to cross-foster. It can get pretty complicated." Lee momentarily looked down, as if tracking the complications of cross-fostering and fostering in his mind. Later, I'd find out just how chaotic the breeding season was for the Bird Group. I could smell the faint tang of the bay trees tucked up against the western edge of the arroyo. Lee looked back at me.

"Okay, now before we go in here, it is important that you be quiet. We try to keep down any unnecessary disturbance of the birds. The adults are on this side, and the adults with young are on the other. So, you'll see some of the breeding adults first and then adults with young."

"All right," I said.

Lee opened the door and ushered me into the building. It was dark and dusty. After the bright sun outside, it took my eyes a moment to adjust to the dim. We were in a narrow corridor with plywood walls and poured concrete for a floor. And KGO—the AM talk radio station out of San Francisco—was playing at a fairly loud volume. What was that about? Didn't Lee just tell me to be quiet?

I followed him down the narrow hallway. This was not what I expected, exactly. I had a half-formed idea of open cages, or large aviaries, from visiting zoos. Dark, claustrophobic hallways filled with a man's booming voice were not it. We reached the end of the corridor and turned left into another hall.

"Now," Lee said softly, leaning towards me, "these are the adults in here. There are peepholes that you can look through, but there's a proper way to do it. Peregrines are predators; they completely focus on movement. You don't want them to see you; you want to minimize your movements. So when you go to look through the peephole, block

it with your finger first. Leave it like that for about a minute. Then move your finger and look through. Like this." He put his finger over a small hole in the plywood wall, waited, and then brought his eye close to his finger and slowly moved his finger away. He looked through the hole for a bit then stepped back and motioned for me to try it.

"So, why do you think your husband is cheating on you?" boomed the radio.

I put my finger against the peephole. The plywood felt rough against it. I waited.

"He just doesn't come home when he's supposed to anymore. He's always working late..."

I put my head close to the wall, slowly moved my finger back, and looked through the hole. I saw a room filled with light. The entire ceiling was open to the sky. Pea gravel covered the floor. At the back of the room was a shelf covered with Astro-turf—sort of like a ledge—and on the shelf was a bird. It wasn't looking at me, so I must have done okay with the peephole.

"Maybe he's working late so he can afford the mortgage on that new house you've got."

The bird sat there, in this artificial room, on the too-bright-green Astro-turf and the dingy gravel, bathed in light that seemed to coalesce around it like a halo. It was large, about the size of a crow. Its head was a black helmet of feathers and its back a slaty blue-gray. The wings were folded and crisp. The eyes were sharp and dark and the feet a startling yellow. Its breast was creamy with dark stripes. It was breathtaking.

"Wow," I thought. I could be working with that? And how had such an amazing bird become endangered, anyway? This bird obviously didn't belong here. It belonged on the side of a cliff rising a thousand feet or more or on the wrist of a medieval king.

I turned from the peephole and the bird and looked over at Lee in the dimness of the corridor. He smiled at me and began to move away. I was amazed there were more chambers in here, all with birds as magnificent as that one. I caught up to Lee.

"Use Preparation H—the formula more people trust."

"Why the radio?" I hissed.

"It masks any noise we might make and keeps the birds from getting stressed."

I got it. White noise. Sound to drown out other sounds. It made sense, but why KGO and not something like classical music was beyond me.

"Plymouth, Chrysler, Dodge Bonanza!" the radio boomed.

We continued down the corridor, past several closed doors



that I assumed led to more chambers. Lee stopped at another peephole.

"This is where the juveniles are. We keep them with an imprinted female who feeds them until they are ready to go to a hack site. The birds you're going to see won't be ready for about another week, but the ones you'll be taking care of will look a lot like them." He did the peephole thing again then stepped back and gestured for me to look. Mindful of what I'd just learned, I blocked the hole with my finger, counted to about 45, couldn't wait any longer, brought my eye close, moved my finger, and looked.

This chamber was the same as the other one, except a board covered with Astro-turf angled out from the Astro-turf ledge—for extra perch space, I supposed. Same gravel, same open ceiling. But there was more activity here. The adult female perched on the ledge was just as stunning as the other adult. But the young didn't have the adult plumage. They were chocolate brown, with light-colored breasts and dark stripes. There was down sticking out from beneath their feathers, on their wings, under what I guessed were their armpits, around their legs, under their tails. A dollop of down bobbed on top of their heads, which made them look silly as well as lumpy. One was on the board looking at its siblings on the ledge, shifting its feet and bobbing its head. The other two were perched together on the other side of the ledge from the adult. The one that was on the board raised its wings and started to flap hard, and I expected it to take off, but it didn't. It just flapped like a maniac for about 10 seconds and then stopped. This must have set off one of the others because it did the same thing. Through all this, the adult remained perched, quiet but watchful.

I stopped looking and turned to Lee, my mouth open for a question. He silenced me with a finger to his lips and moved away down the hall. I followed. When we'd gone about 10 feet, he stopped and looked at me.

"Why do they flap like that?" I asked.

"It's exercise. A precursor to flying. You'll see a lot of that. It's sort of like children crawling before they can walk. Young birds flap before they can fly."

Oh, that made sense; I'd just never thought about it before. But then, I'd never really thought about birds at all. My only experience with birds was when I was 12. I rescued a baby bird that had fallen out of one of the huge Monterey pines in our front yard. I'd stayed up all night feeding it with an eyedropper every two hours. I had fantasies of it growing up and returning to our yard year after year to visit me, how we'd whistle back and forth

and it would come and perch on my shoulder. But—despite my assiduous feeding—it died on the second day. I was so crushed, I'd sworn off birds. But this was different. I wasn't going to have to feed these birds with an eyedropper. And I'd have help. Lee continued down the hall, opened the door at the end, and we stepped out into the bright sun of an April afternoon.

"So, what do you think?" he asked.

"Very impressive. I had no idea they were so elegant," I said.

"Do you think you could work with them? It's hard. You'll have to get up really early. Four, four-thirty most mornings," he warned. I winced. Four-thirty sounded

like the middle of the night. I thought about those awkward juveniles and the enchanting adults and how I'd better try some wildlife work to be sure I'd like it.

"I'd be thrilled to work with these birds," I said.

"Okay, well, let's get you some reading."

We walked back to the office, and Lee—after some rummaging in the stacks of paper—handed me the *Hack Manual*,

which I could keep, and a copy of *Behavior of Young Peregrine Falcons*, by Steve Sherrod, and a video of peregrine falcons, both of which I had to return on pain of death. Then he got a phone call, and I left. I got in my car and drove carefully out of the quarry, past the trailers and shed, out of the arroyo on the dirt road; and turned onto the main road through campus.

After being in that little quarry and the chambers, I was more aware of light, of the glorious view across the bay to the mountains above Monterey. I felt like I could see forever. Everything familiar was somehow different because I knew something I hadn't known before. I had seen a peregrine, and I sensed even then that my life would never be the same.

Clara Sophia Weygandt is completing her master's degree from UM's Environmental Studies program. "Chambers" is an early chapter of her thesis, which documents her seven seasons working as a hack attendant. Other chapters explain how the peregrine became endangered and the day-to-day life of being a surrogate parent to three wild birds of prey. Today peregrine falcons no longer are listed as endangered.

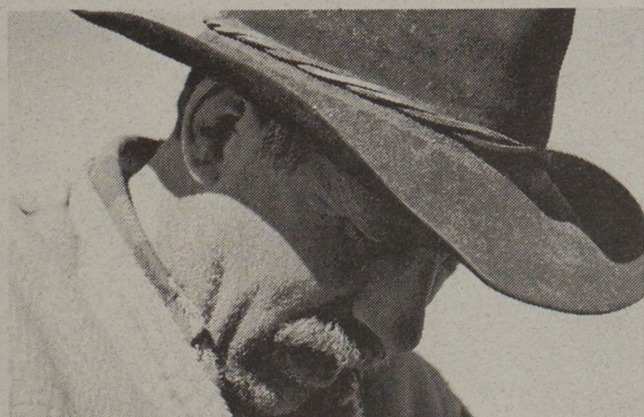
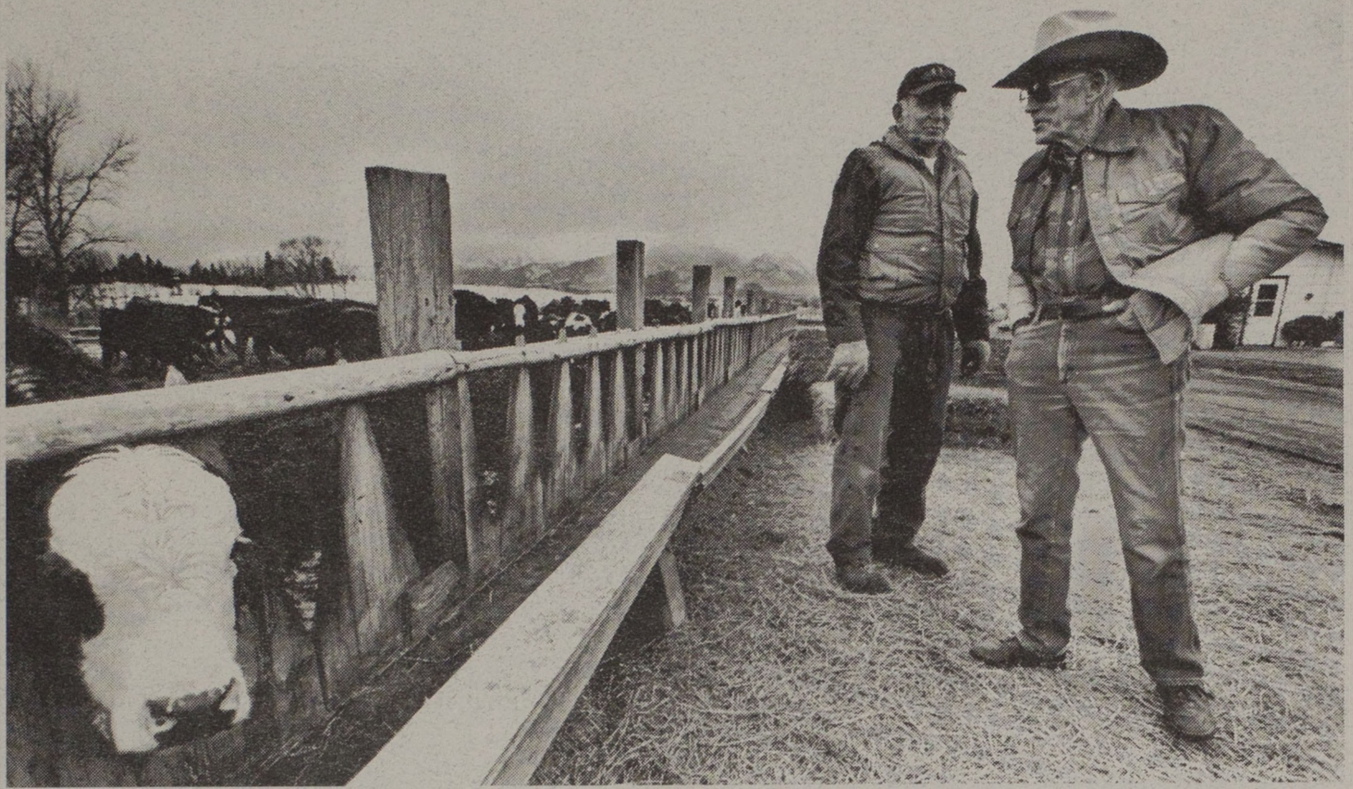
THE JUVENILE RAISED ITS WINGS AND STARTED TO FLAP HARD, AND I EXPECTED IT TO TAKE OFF, BUT IT DIDN'T. IT JUST FLAPPED LIKE A MANIAC FOR ABOUT 10 SECONDS AND THEN STOPPED.

Home on the Range



top: Jay Ericson
bottom right: Jeremy Lurgio
bottom left: Adam Emmert





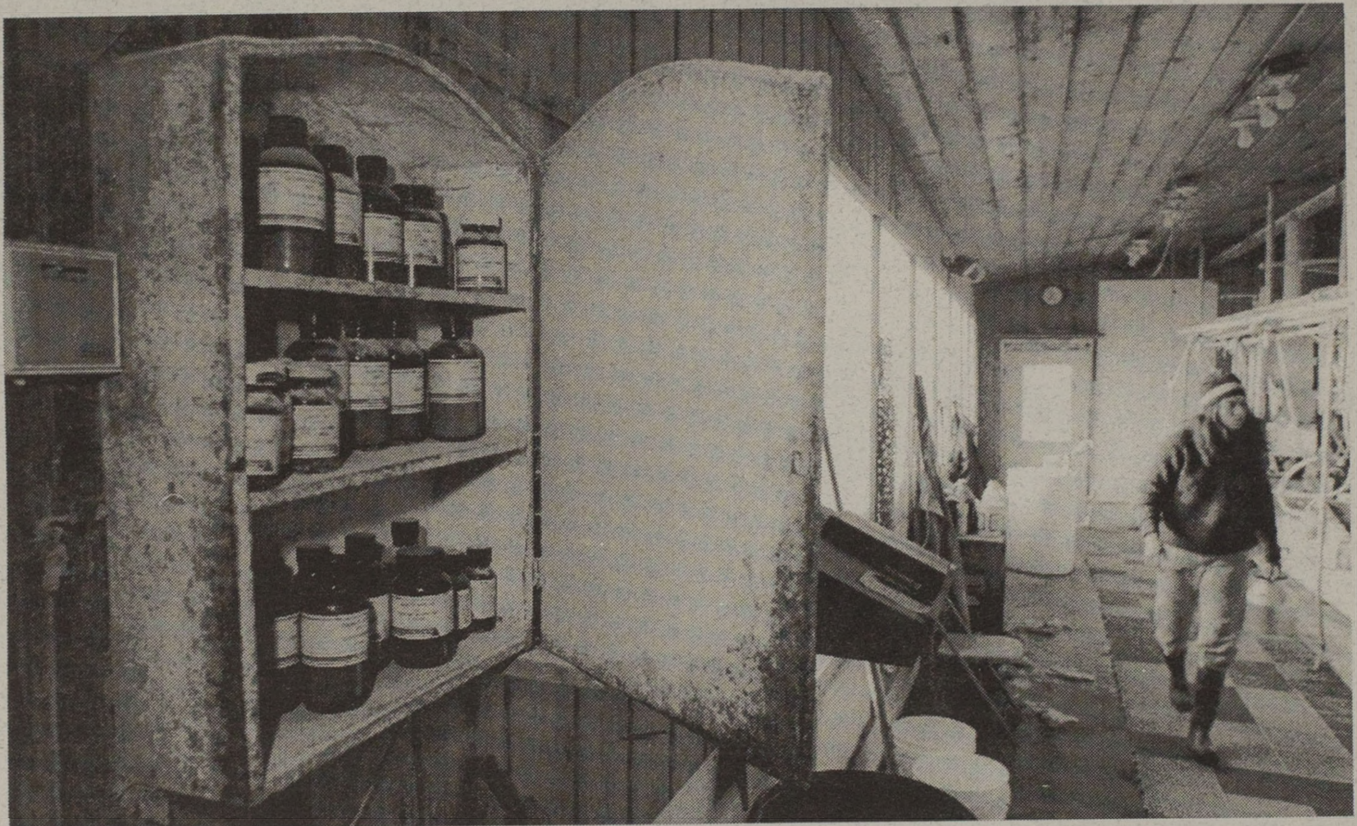
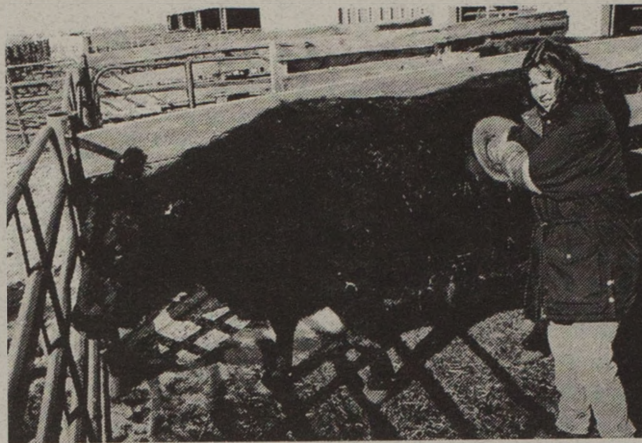
Holy Cow!

Currently, 2.7 million head of cattle live in the state of Montana, outnumbering people approximately three to one. The state's cattle produce 1.1 billion pounds of beef and 303 million pounds of milk annually. The cattle trade and related agricultural industries generate over two billion dollars of revenue each year statewide. The social, cultural, and economic values of the cattle industry run deep in Montana.

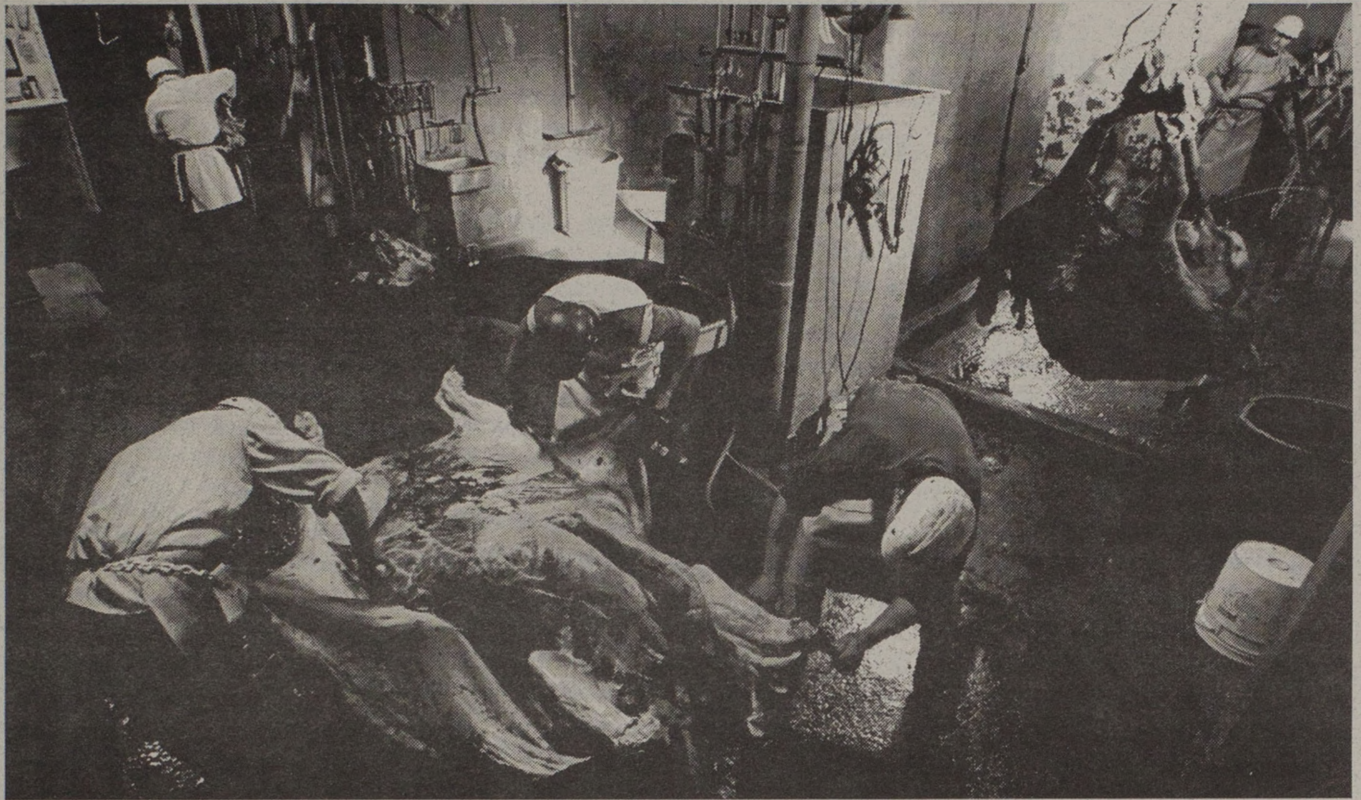
Throughout the spring and summer of 2001, a group of photojournalists set out to tell the story of the people, places, and animals involved in Montana's bovine business. From branding to slaughter, from the work of a cattle broker to that of a large animal vet, the photographers sought to document the intricacies of such a complex venture. They capture on film the lives of those dependent on this living commodity. The result is a glimpse into the world of the cattle industry.

—Camas

*top and middle: Pete McKinney
bottom: Gabriella Brown*



top: Ben Lukes
middle: Matt McFaden
bottom: Ben Lukes



top: Pete McKinney
bottom: Jeremy Lurgio

a vision of restraint

Henry led us into a round meeting room that was designed to look like the inside of a tipi. I took my seat in the circle and faced the other students. We had just made our way from Calgary, Alberta, to the Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana, traveling along the Rocky Mountain Front as part of an environmental studies class on oil and gas issues. It was one of the last days of our field trip. We had spoken to industry people, government officials, local ranchers, and environmental activists, but we had yet to talk with any tribal members about oil and gas development along the Front.

Henry Butterfly, the Blackfeet member who agreed to meet with us, was a water quality specialist for the reservation, not an expert in oil and gas development. However, he was the only tribal member willing to spend Sunday with a group of students from Missoula and Calgary. On the seat next to me, somebody had left an ashtray with a half-burned bundle of sage. It sat there unnoticed by the group, and the meeting began.

Henry told us about his work protecting water quality in the face of development, overgrazing, and pollution. But the class wanted to talk about oil and gas drilling. In southern Alberta, we saw a landscape dotted with active gas wells and crisscrossed by pipelines and access roads. In our heads, we had developed a rather straightforward equation: drilling equals new roads, trucks, snowmobiles, habitat loss, pollution, dead cows, and noxious weeds. We hoped that Henry would add to our growing list of grievances, perhaps giving us information about the industry's impact on the tribe and its water resources.

"What about the Badger-Two Medicine?" one of the students asked, referring to an area that encompasses about 130,000 square miles in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, just west of the Blackfeet Reservation. What has become known as the "Badger" is a key wildlife corridor between Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness that provides crucial habitat for grizzlies, wolves, and all of the region's native species except bison. Most of the Badger is relatively pristine, with some of the cleanest water in Montana. But about 70 percent of the area is covered by oil and gas leases. Drilling has been repeatedly suspended, however, due to the efforts of both the Blackfeet tribe and environmental groups. I waited for Henry's response, expecting him to be concerned for the same reasons as we were.

Henry paused for a long time, as if he didn't know where to begin.

"Well," he started, "we need to back up here. First of all, the Blackfeet have a land claim on the Badger. It is land that was originally part of our reservation, and many tribal members are fighting to reclaim it." In the silence that trailed Henry's words, I was stunned by my own ignorance, and, looking around the circle, I realized I was not the only one. Raised eyebrows told me that the land claim was news to all of us. It occurred to me that, if the Badger was not public land, it was not mine to protect. I tried to imagine how the Badger was stolen, but I could only picture white men in cowboy hats pushing Indians off the land by force. After speaking with Henry that day, I knew that I needed a history lesson.

What I found out was this: The Badger-Two Medicine area, as well as the eastern half of Glacier National Park, was originally part of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, established in 1855. In 1896, the federal government negotiated a \$1.5 million agreement with the tribe that is still a matter of contention. According to the Blackfeet, the tribe retained its ownership rights in both the Badger and in Glacier but leased the mining rights to the government for 100 years. After the Treaty of 1896 was signed, the tribe didn't see it again for over half a century.

In the 1950s, the treaty was uncovered in Browning, Montana, by a young student named Marvin Weatherwax who was writing a social studies paper. Marvin's teacher, a nonnative who wasn't even from Montana, located a copy of the treaty and gave it to Marvin for his paper assignment. When Marvin's grandfather saw it, he drew the curtains, left the house in a hurry, and came back with other tribal elders on horseback. The elders couldn't believe they had their hands on what they considered to be secret papers. Even more shocking was what the treaty said, as its terms were not what the tribe had agreed upon: The 100-year lease had become a sale.

Fourteen years after the Treaty of 1896 was negotiated, the establishment of Glacier National Park secured water and mineral rights for the federal government and negated the tribe's land claim to this part of their reservation. Within the new park boundaries, traditional Blackfeet uses of the land—such as hunting, fishing, and cutting firewood—were no longer allowed. At this point, the Blackfeet realized that some of their land had been stolen, but they didn't know the government rewrote the treaty to legalize the sale. Today, the



"Blue Shaman" acrylic by Mary Pierce

by katherine romano

boundary between the reservation and the park still is disputed.

In the Badger-Two Medicine, the Blackfeet also lost their ownership rights to the federal government, but they retained their treaty rights to use the land for traditional purposes. In the 1970s, the tribe fought to protect these rights from the efforts of environmental groups, who were pushing to include the Badger within the boundaries of the Great Bear Wilderness area. Tribal members opposed wilderness designation, not only because it ignored their land claim, but because it would have precluded a human presence that they felt was both a necessity and a right.

Without wilderness status, however, the Badger was particularly vulnerable to the pro-development agenda of the Forest Service. In the 1980s, the agency opened the area to oil and gas exploration, allowing for road construction, the use of explosives, and helicopter traffic. Leases were issued, without the required environmental impact assessments, for just \$1 per acre. Since then, the Bureau of Land Management—the agency that issues drilling permits for federal lands—has approved drilling at two locations in the Badger, although no drilling has begun.

The most recent delay occurred in February 2002, after the tribe petitioned the federal government to designate the Badger under the National Register of Historic Places. Most (but not all) of the Badger was declared eligible as a “traditional cultural district,” a classification that requires the government to take into account historic values of the land, such as burial sites and fasting places, before development can occur. One of the drilling leases, owned by Louisiana businessman Sydney Longwell, is only partly covered by the boundaries of this new district. Longwell plans to drill for gas on the section of his lease that is not considered “religious property” by the federal government. The Forest Service now is obligated to assess the effects that drilling might have so close to an area listed under the Register. Longwell is pressuring federal agencies to consider that advances in drilling technologies would minimize its impact; thus, drilling in the Badger has become a real possibility.

The Badger’s new status as a “traditional cultural district” is hardly a victory for the tribe, nor has it provided much of a lesson in cross-cultural communication. Tribal members were offended by the Forest Service’s request for the specific locations of their sacred sites. For the tribe, the entire area is sacred and was declared such by tribal resolution in 1973. The Blackfeet repeatedly argued that it is impossible to pinpoint certain holy mountain peaks in the Badger. Individually, tribal members may hold specific

sites more sacred than others, but the mountains in the Badger are home to Blackfeet creation stories, and, thus, the entire area is culturally and spiritually important. The tribe also argued that drilling *anywhere* in the Badger would threaten their cultural survival because of the impacts oil and gas development would have on the area’s general wilderness qualities. Solitude, clean water, the presence of native species and large predators, and the ab-

sence of roads all have spiritual value for the tribe. If these qualities are compromised, tribal members won’t be able to practice their religion.

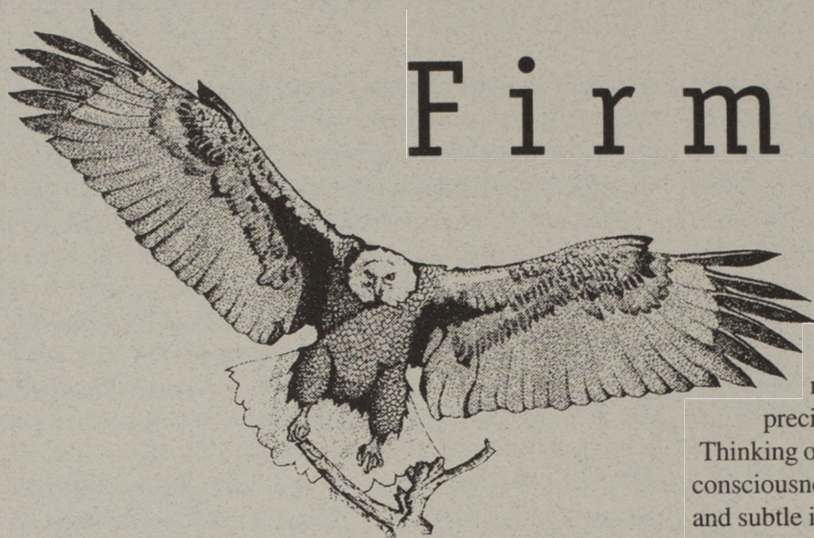
Since the preservation of traditional Blackfeet culture necessitates some degree of wilderness protection, environmental groups have relied on the Badger’s sacred value to strengthen their arguments with legislators against drilling. At the same time, environmentalists have been reluctant to support traditional Blackfeet efforts to manage the Badger themselves, arguing

that tribal leaders may be just as incompetent as the Forest Service in protecting the Badger’s resources. Environmentalists have avoided respecting the Blackfeet land claim because they fear losing the few environmental protections that now exist under federal management in the Badger and, more importantly, the stronger protections that accompany park management in Glacier.

After Henry Butterfly talked to our class last summer, my reasons for wanting to protect the Badger and Glacier were suddenly overshadowed by a more urgent need. Until that day in the tipi room, I hadn’t realized that these areas were federally managed, for better and for worse, at the expense of Blackfeet cultural and religious rights. Upon returning from my trip through the Rocky Mountain Front, another student asked me how I could possibly justify setting aside “public land” that is supposed to be enjoyed by many for the religious rights of a few. The answer no longer lies in the Treaty of 1896 but remains clear in the U.S. Constitution, assuming the government hasn’t changed that, too. The government may not prohibit the free exercise of religion. More recently, the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act clarified government policy and offered specific protections, including access to sacred sites and freedom to worship through traditional ceremonies. Because Native American religions are rooted in the land and dependent upon the land’s condition, drilling in the Badger, as well as restricting traditional uses in the eastern part of Glacier, isn’t just wrong. It’s illegal.

Katherine Romano is a native of New York City. She likes it there, but she’s never going back.

Terra and Its Firma



One summer, standing with my neck craned back to see a golden eagle's spiraling skyward rise, a part of me lifted free and followed. A feeling beyond vertigo swept through my body, subtler and at once more substantial. And some part of that sensation remained long after I lost sight of the bird and walked away. In moments when I'm faced with the limits of my own understanding, I remember that time. In some strange way I am comforted.

I don't know much about eagles, but I watch them at a spot on the river not far from my home in Montana's Bitterroot Valley. Now it is midwinter, and a contingent of balds, both juvenile and mature, patrols the stretch of the Bitterroot River I make a near-daily habit of visiting. The valley, a regional temperate microcosm, is good wintering ground for eagles. In spring, many of them will migrate north as far as Alaska, where the fishing is better and the chick rearing easier.

Time spent with eagles in winter, while offering close-range viewing opportunities, is less spectacular than the soaring thermal flights I see in the warmer months. It is cold as I make my way across a side channel of the river through the tail-out of a deep pool. Often, as today, the birds don't appear according to my schedule. I wait. On an island in the braided river I find a smooth seat on a marooned cottonwood log. A long, arcing riffle stretches beyond the margin of ice and the pebbles at my feet. Across from where I sit, a jumble of black cottonwoods grows on the east bank. One of the tallest trees has branches near the top that angle towards horizontal.

The eagle tree, I call it. I rest a spell, then one of the raptors flaps around the river's curve, low through the corridor of trees in the rhythmic and muscular way that eagles do, to find a perch. There the bird sits, talons gripping the worn limb, and peers about, keeping eye in its insouciant manner.

I watch.

Time slips.

Things stand still.

Almost still. The river slipping by, a breeze snapping up sharp around my cheeks and nose; these and other elements unnoticed by me precipitate, moment by moment, into reality, the world.

Thinking of Thoreau, I practice attentiveness, trying to let my consciousness become a thin thread, tuned to small changes and subtle input. I try to sharpen my perceptions on the cusp of the present moment. The "nick of time," the razor's edge of the present, spools out, forming and unforming the phenomenal world.

On past visits to desert places, remote from rivers, I often have experienced a sensation of the world unfurling from within the limitless poignancy of the present moment. In the high mesa villages of Northern Arizona, Hopi people tether captive eagles to rooftops during ceremonial season. I have seen the eagles, their beaks turned into the gusty mesa-top winds, cast glances this way and that as the dances proceed below. The late summer sun bears down for what feels like forever. Kachinas pound out rhythmic steps in the fine sand of the plazas like they've done for a thousand years. I've heard people there say that if you're bored, you're not paying attention. I like that saying. It reminds me that I'm responsible for what I see, for how I see.

Some weeks ago, reading a *New York Times* a neighbor gave me, I found a curiously titled article. "Scientists Paint Universe as a Vast Sea of Green," it announced. What are they up to now? I wondered. The story explained that two astrophysicists at Johns Hopkins University found a way to measure the light spectrum emitted from over 200,000 galaxies. Their intention was to learn something about the age of the universe, what elements feature in various processes and formations, and how stars develop. All of the galaxies in the study are two to three billion light years away, distant from us by about a quarter of the entire space-time span of the universe's estimated 12 billion-year age.

Stars emit more or less light in different colors, as they mature. Young, hot-burning stars are blue. Older members of the stellar host go red. Out of the survey, the scientists constructed a computerized spectrum chart from which they derived the visible color of the entire spectrum blended together. That color was somewhere between aquamarine and turquoise. To the human eye, were our eyes actually able to view it, the universe would appear green.

artwork by Eugene Beckes

Discontents

by John Bateman

I loved the idea for its evocation of life. It seemed, in some poetic way, to be an affirmation of life—vegetable, cellular, physical—and that ours here on earth was in some way emblematic of the greater character of the universe. Before reading the *Times* article, I'd never exactly pondered the color of the universe. I suppose I had approached it indirectly—what is the nature of existence, the character of God—the questions most of us restlessly poke at. I thought I had found a hint: the universe, at least to the human eye, is turquoise green. The light we receive now from 200,000 distant galaxies is really a snapshot in time of those worlds three billion years ago. We're viewing that snapshot, but the picture hurtles past us at light speed and continues on, we intuit, forever. The galaxies get older, and each passing moment's changing hue in turn zings off into space, into eternity. An eternity of now, and an eternity of ever-transforming now. The old, dependable, rising sun of each day is really another sun each time. And yesterday's sun forever.

The cosmological scale invariably defies my efforts to comprehend. For once, I thought, science has called out a question to the world and received an answer that resonates wonderfully in my bodily experience: Everything is alive!

Sometimes, even here on Earth, remembering this fact is a challenge. Sitting with these eagles alongside the ice-rimmed river and the stark, fractured trees embroidering the edges of a leaden sky, I breathe and feel my blood course warm through my limbs. I try to imagine the other side of the sun cycle, the other side of this frigid coin, and find that I can't picture the vibrancy of summer in this place. I know, of course, summer burned in every leaf and mayfly and evening sundown not so long ago and that it will again, sure as anything can be in my experience of certainty. But the stillness and cold strike me as I look out across the floodplain of hoary pebbles and try to imagine the return of the sun and its green, earthly manifestations, like some always-present ghost once again taking form

in the landscape. I try to picture the thunderous springtime swelling of the river over those now-dry islands, the limbering of the willows, and the new grass shoots nosing through matted gray duff.

As I approached the river's edge before, several magpies rose in an alarming cacophony from among an alder thicket. A spike white-tailed buck lay frozen and dead in a shallow swale. Last fall, in a few hours' time, I saw the black and white birds transform a steaming deer-gut pile into an odd, clean impression in the grass. Today, the scavengers could make only small, hard-won meals from the carcass in temperatures that stymie even the most efficient agents of decay.

It is eagles and songs,
not satellites and
cloud seeding, that
have made enough
desert rainfall each
summer for 50
generations of Hopi
corn farmers.

The bird now sitting in the eagle tree, a robust juvenile bald showing light flecks in its dark body, has not yet grown the white head and tail feathers of an adult. Sometimes young eagles gather into groups and wheel and spar in aerial acrobatics. Approaching this spot on a recent, warmer day, a friend and I saw seven or more young eagles diving low to the water, some landing, some wheeling over the river. It was my pal's 30th birthday, and we'd come out to try some winter fishing. Seeing eagles in such numbers seemed a rare blessing, perhaps made more meaningful in the eyes of two semi-adult male humans (outsized kids, really,

who never left behind the thrill of splashing around in water), each, in his own way, paused on the verge of fledging out the full mantle of maturity.

Today, the raptors' *modus operandi* is simple and repetitive: perch, observe, fly to another tree. Perch. Watch. Fly. My mind wanders off into a daydream, and I look up again to find the bird has gone. Undiluted attention over time is the hunter's greatest asset, and the eagles have perfected the skill well beyond my novice abilities. I am reminded of Thoreau chasing an elusive loon back and forth across Walden Pond, following its wild cries in the dusk. My birds are all but silent.

continued on page 34

Learning to Dance

Dusk pushed down on me in April of 1996 when I left Bozeman, Montana, and traveled south for my first trip into the Gallatin Canyon. Earlier in the day I felt the first stirrings of spring, but the road pulled me back into the deep winter. Snow twisted in the beams of my headlights. The clouds were high, and the moon must have been close to full, because everything was covered in an eerie, skim milk sheen. The Gallatin River rolled along in blackness, my truck moving against its current. Snow draped over the boulders that crouched low in the riverbed. Light pounced off crests in the water and rippled downstream. My eyes strained to see around each bend in the road, and every shadow threatened to move and take the form of mule deer, moose, bighorn sheep, or mountain lion.

I eased my foot off the gas pedal when I noticed the crosses. They lined both sides of the road in irregular intervals, luminescent in the darkening of the night. Each represented a life lost on the highway. If I had known then that I would be able to put, not just one, but six names to the death that frequented that valley, perhaps I would have turned my truck around and followed the river out of the canyon. But that night, the motion of everything I saw mesmerized and seduced me. Some mysterious dance captured my curiosity and sucked me into the phenomenal and wild beauty of the place.

Individuals who are equally charmed by the Gallatin Valley populate the resort community of Big Sky. At 11,166 feet, Lone Peak is Big Sky's crown jewel, looming above the other mountains in the Madison Range. Weather clings to its summit, often shrouding it from sight on an otherwise sunny day. Treeless ridgelines span out from each side of the peak like two massive arms ready to engulf the mountain village in their icy embrace.

Skiers fuss and scramble over the opportunity to drop into The Big Couloir, a famous run, which originates to the north of the summit and carves its way down to a permanent snowfield. Beneath the Couloir lies a glacier composed of cretaceous rock, mountain streams, and ice. Over time, the ice shifts and melts, rocks break and slough, and the glacier moves.

When the snow melts on Lone Mountain and the ski runs

disappear, the streams below the scree swell and rush into the valley. Along the narrow and rocky riverbed where the Gallatin cuts through the canyon, rock shoots up like a cathedral wall, drawing my eyes skyward. There, sharp mountain ridges slice into the clouds and reveal the atmosphere. In early spring and late summer, the water is low and the color of jade. Its glacial green stands crisp against spring snow and highlights the patterns of the bottom in the summer. As I float down the river, my eyes are repeatedly drawn to its curves. I peer around each one, trying to unveil its mystery. I spot a grizzly cub bounding along the bank, spooked by my boat. A trout pops the mirror of water behind a boulder. A fisherman casts his twinkling line in the haze of late day, and the steady motion of his arms blankets him with solitude. I look up the canyon to see mountains perfectly juxtaposed with the river against the sky, and I feel my own breath mingling with the wind.

On the day after Thanksgiving in 1999, I felt that intimacy shatter. I took the day off from skiing to stay home and make candles. My house was clouded with the heat of melting wax and the scent of vanilla. As I poured the last candle, I glanced at the clock. *Three-thirty, almost dark; okay, Paul, where are you, babe?* My boyfriend Paul and his ski patrol buddy had planned to ski a closed area at the resort that morning. Like most ski bum couples, we had established a rule: get home from the backcountry and call your sweetie.

The phone rang, and I snatched it up after only half a ring. Paul's brother's voice came through: "Where was Paul skiing today?" I told him, "Dobies, why?" He said, "Oh jeez, okay, rumor has it that there was an avalanche, and the Couloir slid. There's more to it, but I will call you back." He hung up. I dropped the phone and suddenly felt strangled by the hot air. I started pacing around my house, trying not to panic. Flashes of Paul, pinned under snow, gasping for breath, crowded my mind. *It's going to be fine. Take a deep breath.* No matter what I tried to tell myself, anxiety filled my stomach, and it was all I could do not to throw up. *Okay, just chill; just wait.* But my body wouldn't listen. The



essay and photos by Danielle Lattuga

phone rang again promptly, and Jason blurted out, "One person is dead; one is injured." *Paul and Rich are the only two up there.* I felt the sky press down on me, like everything was about to go black. My knees tingled and weakened. Everything but the image of Paul's face drained from my mind. I could not think or speak. Paul was completely out of my reach. Then Jason said, "But I think someone drove Paul's car down from the mountain, so that's good. We can assume that's good." I was confused and terrified. My head vibrated with so many questions that it began to ache.

Several more fragmented phone calls and a few hours later, Paul's drained voice filtered through the phone. "Jack's dead, D." "I know," I said. "Where are you?"

Everyone gathered at Jack's house. We were all numb. Paul sat immobile in a chair, staring at the floor. I dropped to my knees and wrapped myself up in him. *I don't know what to do. I thought he was dead. He's so sad, and I can't even imagine what is in his head right now. What do I do? Jack's gone.* I felt conflicted by grief over Jack's death and relief over the fact that I had not lost my lover that day.

Over the next three days, through fragments of conversation with Paul and our friends, I pieced together the sequence of events that led to Jack's death. Jack, Matty, Jason, Nicole, Alex, and Chris were hiking up to the snowfield with intent to ski the lower portion of the Big Couloir. The area was closed off by ski patrol because the snow base was not established. Though they were excited about getting tracks in the fresh snow, they took proper precautions to determine avalanche danger. Like all well-trained backcountry skiers, they dug a pit to expose the layers of the snow pack. Avalanche danger appeared minimal. Snow fell steadily as they worked.

They tested each person's avalanche transceiver and then began to ascend the east face. Jack and Matty led the group, their skis strapped to their backpacks. As they traversed below the cliff called Dobies and headed toward the run out of the Big Couloir, a loud whooshing sound erupted above them. The avalanche roared down and buried them both as their friends struggled simultaneously to keep their eyes on the massive white cloud and get themselves to safety. Matty was buried with his glove sticking out of the snow.

They uncovered him swiftly. Jack yelled, "Man down!" as the avalanche swept him away, six feet down into a trap of snow, rock, branches, and ice. Although Chris, Alex, and Jason located his transceiver signal immediately, recovering him was a difficult task. Paul and Rich arrived just a minute or two after the slide and frantically scrambled up the slope to help the others dig. It took four grown men, all athletes and friends, to wrench him free. Jack's body was twisted and crushed, but his face was washed with peace.

Jack's skis and pack had acted as anchors, pulling him down into the moving snow, making it impossible for him to ride to the surface of the avalanche. Paul, Chris, and Jason tore the straps off of his backpack to free him, their bodies pumped with adrenaline, their breath fast and minds focused. Paul breathed into Jack's lungs while Rich pumped his chest. A brief

flutter of a pulse brought them hope, and the four of them continued CPR. Snow continued to billow and shift on the slope above them, and they hurriedly moved from the slide path while carefully attending to Jack until the ski patrol arrived. His friends did all that they could, but Jack died. As they rode the ski lift down to their cars, the endorphins that had enabled them to respond to the danger and intensity of the situation slowly gave way to shock. Paul felt his fingertips go cold and nausea creep up into his throat. None of them could speak.

Just a week before, we were all hanging out at Jack's house. I watched as Jack, Paul, and the other boys practiced tricks on the trampoline. I remember noticing the sparkle in Jack's eyes whenever he spoke and how he flung his body gracefully into one backflip after another. I worried about him falling and hitting his head. His broad shoulders floated above the backdrop of the mountains and suspended him in the air, against the blue sky. This is how I see him now, forever burned into my memory.

Jack's family and many friends scattered his ashes on the mountain three days after he died. As we shared memories of Jack in the following weeks and reflected on the nature of our own mortality, it became apparent that many of us held a common belief: We all would rather die doing something that we love, in nature, than any other way. This was not a

continued on page 37



interview

Leader of a

An Interview with Jennifer Ferenstein,

Working my way around the Sierra Club website, I came across a list of its presidents. Starting in 1892, the list covers over 100 years of Club history. I was immediately drawn to the name at the top of that list: John Muir. A founder of the Club and a legend among conservationists and lovers of wild places, he held the position until 1914. Next on the list was Joseph LeConte, president for two years and, more significantly, future father of the Forest Service. The last name on that list, the current president, is Jennifer Ferenstein.

The Sierra Club is a conservation organization with a history steeped in environmental activism. It began with just 102 members and today is over 700,000 members strong. The role of president, like the Club, has changed over the years, and today there is an Executive Director as well as a President of the Board of Directors. Jennifer Ferenstein holds the position of President of the Board. She believes strongly in the philosophy of John Muir—that connecting with people and, when possible, showing them beautiful areas are the best ways to encourage conservation. She also realizes that what it means to be a contemporary conservationist is vastly different than what it meant for Muir and LeConte. In the Sierra Club today, terms like justice and equality carry the same weight as preservation and wilderness.

A 1994 graduate of the Environmental Studies Master's program at the University of Montana, Ferenstein uses her position in the Sierra Club to guide the nationwide organization in a way that allows smaller, community-based campaigns to have a stronger voice. She believes that face-to-face personal contact is critical in facilitating success in grassroots efforts. Jennifer Ferenstein's name is right at home on that list of noteworthy Club presidents.

R: What do you see as the greatest challenges facing the environmental movement, and how will you address them as president of the Sierra Club?

J: I think the biggest challenge is to increase the general public's awareness and, once they have become aware, to provide a positive way for people to affect change. People live busy lives; they have their families, but they still want to contribute to their communities. The challenge for environmentalists is to find ways to allow people to see becoming environmentally conscious and actually getting involved as a contribution to their community. It's a challenge because people don't like controversy, or the problem seems too big, and they don't really see how they can affect that directly. Or there's someone shouting louder on the other side, and they may have a good argument, too. We need to continue to reach a large number of people, educate them, and get them to trust the Sierra Club, as well as other conservation groups. You can't depress people with "you know we're all going to go to hell in a handbasket anyway," because then it's hard to actually engage people. Some of the things we deal with are inherently difficult issues. It's hard to make people feel they can actually make a difference.



Jay Ericson

Legacy

President of the Sierra Club Board of Directors

by Richarda Ruffle

R: What are some specific techniques you use to address these challenges?

J: I think an effective technique is to create an atmosphere where people feel that their ideas are welcome and that their energy is welcome. Part of this is to try to get people out on the ground, wherever it is. John Muir's philosophy was that you get people on the outings. Take them to Yosemite. Once they actually see the places, then how could they not want to protect them? You have to make the connections with people's day to day lives and the things that you work to try to protect. Get people out. Whether it's cleanup day, an Earth Day event, monitoring a timber sale, or working with a community affected by a factory, I think you have to actually get them out there. By getting people involved you reach them at the core, visceral level, not just watching it on TV or reading about it in a magazine. When they see real people they can feel a healthy outrage: things are not right; something is not right with the situation.

R: What are some of the responsibilities of the Sierra Club Board of Directors?

J: Basically, we go around the country twice a year and meet with different chapters and experts in the Sierra Club and learn about their particular issues. At board meetings we cover an array of issues. For example, people wanted to see us update our grazing policy, and creating new conservation policy is really something only the board can do. So while a lot of what we do is administrative, we spend more time (and I hope we spend more and more time) leading the Club in terms of conservation policies that we set. My job is to make sure that things get put on the agenda, that we have time to discuss them, and that we figure out how best to resolve conflicts and promote new policies.

Being a spokesperson for the Club, I spend a fair amount of time traveling around the country. I meet with people in the grassroots and hear what kinds of issues they're working on. I go to some of their conservation meetings. Oftentimes, I'll get a call on something that has happened, and people want to know what the Sierra Club's position is. Or I'll meet with reporters or magazine editors and try to interest them in conservation issues that the Sierra Club works on.

I'm also responsible for promoting our mission. When I got elected to the board, we decided to take a survey of our groups, chapters, and our regional conservation partners to ask them what they thought should be the priorities for the Sierra Club. We came out with four major priorities, which were protecting wildlands, ending commercial logging on public lands, protecting clean water, and promoting better ways for our communities to grow.

I saw that people who grew up in very urban places can have a harder time understanding the connections between the things that they do—for example, eating a hamburger and actually killing a cow.

R: In other media, you have mentioned environmental justice as important to you. How does that tie in with the four goals?

J: One of the things that is important to me, and that we see a lot here in the Intermountain West, is that environmentalists get branded as being anti-job, anti-growth, anti-people even. I think that one of the most important things we can do as a movement is always have a proactive solution—something that people can positively latch onto as an alternative to the traditional paradigm of the boom or bust cycle of economics. The solution involves addressing some of the really hard questions, such as, What does it mean to be sustainable?

We consider the human dimensions. We have both the human rights campaign and the environmental campaign, and the environmental justice work that we do is sort of an umbrella. Our solutions have to be screened to make sure that what we're doing is consistent with the guidelines

we put forward for human rights, the environment, and social justice. Environmentalists and activists have been accused of going in and working communities for their own personal agendas rather than actually investing in or being a part of the communities. It is a delicate balance and a delicate line to draw. We try, where possible, to go into communities, find out what their concerns are, and partner with them when they want our help, rather than a top-down, stomping into the room, and saying, "Now we're going to be the boss." This is grassroots organizing at its best, done at the local level.

R: With your position and constant travel, is it difficult or even possible to invest yourself and be involved with grassroots campaigns?

J: I think that because I live in Missoula and because I am still involved in a lot of grassroots work—whether it's organizing for a roadless hearing or conflicted timber issues—that I have a pretty good handle on what it takes to be involved at the grassroots level. When I go around as the Club president, I often go to learn and hear what people have to say and try to figure out ways that Sierra Club can best help in people's efforts. I also try to be supportive. For example, there may be something that a group or chapter has been working on for a long time, and having someone from the national Club come and be there is enough to push them over the top. We are basically there to help as many entities of the Club accomplish their conservation goals as possible. I get to learn a lot and meet a lot of people.

R: Do you feel that the Sierra Club represents people's diversity of needs?

J: I think it could be better. It's hard because the board is elected by the members as a whole, yet the members don't always look at the bigger picture. They pick people that are attractive to them on an individual basis but not necessarily how they might reflect on the Club as a whole. While we generally have gender balance, we haven't had that much diversity on the board in terms of Native Americans, African Americans, or any other minority groups. So we

definitely could do better there. We can help with that by running candidates for the board that represent that diversity. We have people on the board who can support environmental justice issues whether or not they're a minority or a member of the affected community. Yet I think we would be better served if we had more diversity. I think we have a ways to go.

R: How, if at all, has being in the University of Montana's graduate Environmental Studies program and living in Missoula influenced your activism?

J: I probably had it deep in me, but I think that going through the Environmental Studies program was one of the biggest influences because of its emphasis on encouraging people to become involved in their communities. I could sense when I came to Missoula that it was one of those places

where you could actually lend a hand and become involved. In programs in larger communities, it's hard to figure out where to plug in. There's sort of an anonymity, and that makes it difficult to figure out where you can actually be effective. There are a lot of people here in Missoula who care. That's always a good environment when you're encouraging people to get involved. And there are many ways to become involved.

I think that the Environmental Studies program has the right mix of professors and stu-

dents; it has good chemistry. I think it was designed to encourage you to be an advocate. Advocate, I believe, is a really positive word. It doesn't mean that you can't listen to other people's points of view or that you can't change your point of view. It means that you are interested in the rights of something else. You are willing to be an advocate, to be the voice against injustice.

R: How do you see your background in biology playing a role in what you do now?

J: I think that it gives me a better understanding of the interrelationships between things. What I like about the Environmental Studies program is that it is multidisciplinary. Complicated issues can involve science, law, economics, philosophy. So I think a background in science helps me gain a technical understanding of ecological issues. Yet,

One of the things we see a lot of here in the Intermountain West is that environmentalists get branded as being anti-job, anti-growth, anti-people even. I think that one of the most important things we can do as a movement is always have a proactive solution.

sheer science is not going to solve the problems that we face. It is going to take people who can articulate a more complete vision.

R: What are your plans after your term on the Sierra Club Board expires?

J: I'll probably try to spend more of my time in the realm of education, possibly through journalism, through some sort of understanding of how you provide information to a larger group of people, in some way enabling national organizations to be more effective. That may mean working for a foundation or even a corporation in the private sector that is looking to make its way of doing business really progressive; I am actually looking for ways to change the corporate paradigm. I've worked for the government, for the Forest Service, for [Montana Gubernatorial Candidate] Mark O'Keefe, and for nonprofits, but I never have really worked for a for-profit organization on these sorts of issues. One of the limitations on corporations is the inherent goal of capitalism. How can they do good? How can they do better? I don't know where I'll go next, but I'll probably take a break from the nonprofit world for a little while and look at some other options.

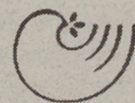
R: What sparked your interest in environmental issues to begin with?

J: I grew up in Berkeley, but my mom was raised on a cattle ranch in Oregon. As a child, I spent a lot of time between those two types of worlds. I saw that people who grew up in very urban places can have a harder time understanding the connections between the things that they do—for example, eating a hamburger and actually killing a cow. Those connections were very clearly defined for me, because my grandparents killed their own cows and slaughtered their own chickens and got their own eggs. I think that I saw the difference between the choices that we make in our lives and the impact that they have. I also think of how people in rural areas take so much pride in their lives, how hard they work, and how they don't take so much for granted as do people in an urban setting. All of that influenced the way I am. The flip side is that there's a lot of mis-education about the impact of human activities on the land. Sometimes people want something so much that they turn a blind eye to the environmental impact. I think there's a lot of people out there who live with the land rather than dominate it. We should focus on what we can do—awareness, education, and alleviating economic disparity so people can afford to do the right thing. I think we should connect with this behavior rather than poor behavior. There's so much that we tend to encourage. I think we could do so much better by encouraging conservation.

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The world has a funny way of changing just when you think you have the least part of it nailed. Weeks after reading the green universe news, a follow-up article appeared in the local paper. A computer problem was discovered that altered the previous outcome of the color spectrum findings. The embarrassed scientists informed the world that the cosmos is not, in fact, a shimmering, resplendent, hopeful turquoise green.

The universe, after certain corrections were made, emerged clothed in the noble and distinctive color *beige*. Beige? I laughed myself silly. What an unbelievable, unromantic, un-called-for letdown. Originally, the researchers were so proud of the stellar hue they had captured for Earthly viewing that they named it "Cosmic Spectrum Green." They sheepishly declined to embellish the beige with further description. The green universe had been a chimera in a computer program's misapplied binary vision.

Science—computer glitches notwithstanding—is adept at gleaning information from the observable world, at illuminating mechanistic relationships. Meaning, the weaving we make of the information gained, is slippery and emerges between the lines that science draws. It needs the filter of living relationships. The eagle and I both have a perspective on the world we inhabit. Our two minds meet at a point science cannot find. I believe there is some magic in the meeting, an old magic that I can't explain but sense is real. Human consciousness wants to orient itself in the world and, in so doing, instinctively seeks the help, the perspective, of the nonhuman world. And the eagle, with its obvious superhuman abilities, is a natural ally in this quest.

Perhaps science's green universe simply reinforces truths long understood by those who pay attention. Everything changes. Always. And in that transformation, if we can follow along, is continuity and life. Vibrancy is born in the tension of each dying moment. These are platitudes, it's true, but when we put words to big ideas they rarely escape sounding hollow and hackneyed. We talk of God as the embodiment of love, the ultimate source, all-knowing, all-seeing, beginning and end. We speak of the universe as infinite, a "vast sea." Metaphors apply but still seem to fall short. The eagle is lofty, regal, stately, dignified. These descriptions, while not inaccurate, only can paint part of the picture; they seem too obvious to be genuinely helpful in conveying both the certainty and the uncertainty inside of us. The overarching message seems to be that there are things in life—in fact, things at the very center of life—that we just can't know. Yet we keep trying to communicate the mystery and the points of surety we find in

the mystery. It is tricky business.

Thoreau was aware of the nuances of eagle-sight. "The sun is but a morning star," he wrote, in characteristically cryptic manner, by way of ending *Walden*. What is the hint here? The statement sounds prefatory rather than conclusive. The whole of the preceding several hundred pages serves to prepare the reader for this single revelation. Throughout the book, references to dawn and Eden accompany emphases on the present moment, on maintaining a condition of attentiveness, wakefulness, the equivalent of the Buddhist "beginner's mind." Thoreau—despite his often lengthy and detailed descriptions—champions obscurity. He so often seems to contradict himself and to dance around the act of really saying what he

means. Coming from Thoreau, an assiduous reviser, this is anything but accidental. I think the reason for the apparent obscurity is that explicitness is the enemy of the deepest meaning. As the singer Bruce Cockburn puts it, "Those who know don't have the words to tell, and the ones with the words don't know too well." Why

For once, I thought, science has
called out a question to the
world and received an answer
that resonates wonderfully in
my bodily experience:
Everything is alive!

else the ascetic seeker's emphasis on silence, on listening rather than speaking?

Space probes and telescopes are tools to answer questions that for much of human time were instinctively posed to the eagle. It strikes me that there was a time when we believed that the world could be understood collaboratively. We could look to the abundant and diverse life forms that shared our sphere and ask for help in making sense; help in surviving; help, perhaps, even in evolving. I don't think this is as romantic a notion as it seems. The eagle has sight. Vision. It is at home in the atmosphere, soars circling heavenward until its discrete outline disappears into the vault of blue-white sky. And then reappears, returns to Earth, perhaps carrying answers or, even better, amplified questions. It commands a magical, mysterious, and observable power that lends itself to our urge for understanding.

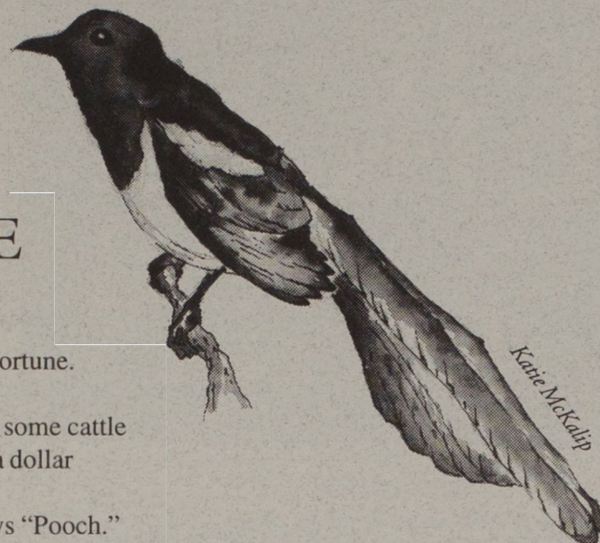
Can the tools that science develops replace the technology that attempts to align human concerns with the flight and sight of the eagle? I think not. The eagle can act as the embodiment of our yearnings, aspirations, and imagination. It is the steward of our most precious prayers and hopes. Science may realize wonders at the limits of our imagination, but it takes a messenger outside of our creation and control to press beyond those margins. It is eagles and songs, not satellites and cloud seeding, that have made enough desert rainfall each summer for 50 generations of Hopi corn farmers.

What does it mean to apply eagle-sight to my life?

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Camas Spring 2002

THE MAGPIE



I found a baby magpie once and sold it for a fortune.
I didn't know it belonged in a colony.
I was out on the Old Davis Place checking on some cattle
when I found it. Great Uncle Wesley paid me a dollar
for the bird, split its tongue, taught it to talk,
never had a name for it like his dog was always "Pooch."
The bird learned Uncle Wesley's whistle
and the dog's non-name. The bird whistled, called,
the dog always came, believing
he heard someone who wanted him.

Half my uncle's house was given to the bird:
the formal entry and entire upstairs,
where the bird found light and undressed windows.
It was what I heard called an eccentricity.
But it was magic, contrary, otherly.
Wire net was stretched over the opening
into the parlor, front door nailed shut,
so everyone came into the house
through the kitchen with its swept dirt floor.
Great Aunt Elizabeth was a spare landlady
to her winged tenant, sturdy as her shoes, black
laced-over tongue below raw cotton anklets.
She set a dutiful and economic table.

My grandmother frequently visited
her brother Wesley, unannounced, with me
and maybe one or two siblings.
The parlor could be accessed off the dining room.
It was always half-dark, only a 40 watt bulb
in a single lamp. I can't even remember any windows.
The room was like my grandmother's basement—

a low-light impression of intent to do harm.
But the yellow-billed bird that I had found
might come, fly down the stairs, stare at me from a perch
behind the wire net, fan-stretch its black and white wing
feathers and speak, not the "querulous quack"
the Field Guide describes,
but learned complaints, a whistle, a non-name....

M U R I E L Z E L L E R

"The Magpie" first appeared in the chapbook Legacy

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Perhaps it is as simple as having faith that what I can't know is at least as important as what I think I know. The blessing of winter watching is just sitting, waiting, being attentive. As a teenager, I devoured Castaneda's *Don Juan* books. I loved many things about them, but, perhaps most of all, I loved the fact that none of the events may ever have happened. But as Peter Matthiessen points out, this fact does not make the stories any less true. "Not doing" is a practical non-practice that Don Juan perpetually admonishes the note-taker, Castaneda, to engage. As a method of passive but complete attentiveness, it strikes me as something the eagle does superlatively. Don Juan's favorite trick for breaking the habit of the active is to punctuate the world with humor and uncontrollable laughter. He will suddenly stand on his head, make faces, drool.

This universal color mishap is nothing if not humorous. Green's life-affirming connotation is really a version of cultural relativism on the super-macro scale; it becomes planetary relativism. Perhaps the original computer spectrum outcome was a manifestation of our human animal desires focused through the work of the scientists: the distinction between seer and seen broke down and a picture of our deepest hopes projected out upon the numberless stars.

Once in a while, on particularly good mornings, I awaken to my own laughter. My mind may grope after the fading strands of the joke, but my body just shivers in delight. I regard this as a blessing.

Ravens love to bother eagles. One flaps by vociferously as I poke around on the ground beneath the eagle tree. I crook my neck back, press my tongue toward the back of my throat, and emit a feeble croak. Whatever I said must have meant something, and we exchange pleasantries or insults—who knows which?—until I'm dizzy from turning around watching the bird circle. Raven tries different phrases on me: a low-pitched, two part croak that I return in some fashion; a series of higher outbursts, as if calling out to the raven world that it has found a two-legged lost or weird enough to talk to. With a final direction change, it lines off, mumbling to itself.

I thread my way through tangled thorn bushes and fallen trees back to the river's edge. A juvenile bald eagle glides off behind the trees towards the mountains, trailing silence in the wake of the raven's calls. I reach down and place my palm against earth, steadying myself to sit. My hand finds a clump of dried grass. In my mind's eye, spring's green ghost flashes to my touch.

The sun rises different and new each day. In its light I find the comfort of all that I can never know of this life.

A graduate student in UM's Environmental Studies program, John Bateman is looking forward to a kinder, gentler season of eagle-watching as he fishes the Bitterroot River this summer.

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new notion to me, and Jack's death never made me doubt it, but I found myself struggling with it nonetheless. Jack knew the joy and risks of big mountain skiing; therefore, he gave himself to the mountain. In order to regain control, we took him back from it. To find closure, we returned him to the very mountain that took him from us. Fear of losing those I love or dying before I am ready has crept into my mind at unexpected times, but I have never let it paralyze me. Yet, in the months following Jack's death, it almost did.

For the first time in my life, death was piling itself on top of me. I was overwhelmed because young people I knew seemed to be dying all around me. Jack was not the first person in Big Sky that I knew who died, nor was he the last. It was getting to be too much. I felt fear encroaching on me in places that before had only brought me joy and clarity. The mountain and the river were no longer welcoming. Panic and uncertainty replaced comfort with darkness. I began not to trust the snow or the river into which it melted. During the spring following Jack's death, the river brought disquietude to the very edge of my skin.

*Treeless ridgelines span out
from each side of Lone Peak
like two massive arms ready
to engulf the mountain
village in their icy embrace.*

I was in my second year of raft guiding and starting to take customers out into the high water. In my first season, I looked forward to this challenge and had confidence in my skills. I learned to read the different personas that the river assumed each day. The water levels shift, and the temperature fluctuates, revealing new features in a rapid, changing the speed of the ascent, and affecting the impact of my paddle stroke. I counted on these variations to make my trips exciting but hadn't counted on my own inner landscape shifting and changing. Nightmares haunted me during training week. I dreamed of people in my boat dying in the river. Each morning, I woke up so riddled with anxiety that I couldn't eat, feeling weak and shaky every time I set foot in the boat.

In the past, I got a thrill when I swam in the Gallatin in mid-May. That spring, all I could think about was how bodies had been lost in that river year after year. I could put names to some of those bodies. I realized that the risks I had always enjoyed had concrete consequences attached to them. I only saw loss, not possibility, in the unruly nature of a river that I had always respected.

One afternoon in late May, I was paddling a training boat with three other guides. They were good friends of mine who called me Lil' D because I was the smallest raft guide in the company, and they lavished brotherly affection or torture on me at any given moment. We were coming into a rapid, and one of the guys yelled out, "Who wants to swim it?" I looked over, and my friend Colin said, "Go for it, D." He had a beautiful smile on his face, and something came clear to me in that moment. Colin and Jack were friends.

One week after Jack died, Colin's cousin also died in an avalanche. Colin felt those losses deeply, but there he was, loving the unpredictability of nature as much as he always had.

I dropped my paddle and jumped out of the boat. The current pulled me away and yanked me in every direction. It willed me toward sucking holes. It buried me in waves and took my breath in rapid smacks. But I struggled to keep my wits about me and my feet pointed downstream near the water's brown, churning surface. As I fought to catch my breath, I swallowed great gulps of spring runoff.

Although it felt like I would never get through the rapid, the swim only took me a few minutes. In that time, the cold water shocked me into acute awareness. As I felt rocks shift and grind below me in the river, a buzzing vibrated through my bones. Every muscle in my body tensed. I watched the boat get farther away. *Don't go; I don't want to lose anyone else.* My senses withdrew into my core in search of warmth and breath. My stomach scrunched and tightened. *I'm afraid of dying.* I felt as though I was col-

lapsing into myself. There was no room inside of me for anything except that moment. *I am not comfortable being out of control anymore.* No room for fear. *Why can't I love this?* No room for questions. *I am not who I used to be.* Absolutely no room for regret. The river tore at my psyche and brought my fears to the surface. One by one, it pummeled them out of me and carried them away. *It is time to redefine my boundaries with this place.* I felt blood pulse and rush through my system, melding with the sound of the current and the wind. I moved in perfect unison with the river. Bodies have been lost in the Gallatin, but on that day, I was transformed in the river.

My friends eddied out below the rapid and watched me bounce and twist through it. I punched through the last wave and rode the ripples into the slow water. The river quieted and released me as I let myself float into the side of the raft. Colin hoisted me into the boat with one arm. I sputtered and collapsed at his feet while he laughed and said, "All we could see were your huge, wide eyes as you bobbed up and down in the wave train." I said, "Well, a girl's got to see where she's going."

I think I found a rhythm. I think the river taught me. I closed my eyes and let the rocking of the boat calm me. I saw Jack. He was a graceful skier. His movement was musical, and he knew the contours of the mountain. What he did in life was not driven by fear but by love and curiosity. He had found his rhythm and was dancing his dance.

On that chilly day in May, the river and I danced our own.

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The Birds of Heaven: Travels with Cranes

by Peter Matthiessen, North Point Press, 2001

Throughout history and across many cultures, cranes have been considered sacred symbols. East Asian cultures regard the red-crowned crane as an emblem of peace, harmony, fortune, and long life. The sarus crane of India is a holy messenger of the Hindu deity, Vishnu, and often is heeded as a symbol of fidelity due to its propensity to mate for life. The aborigines of Australia honored the brolga as a totemic animal, and in the United States a Hopi Indian sign based on the footprint of a crane became the unity symbol popularized by the peace movement in the 1960s.

In Peter Matthiessen's latest book, *The Birds of Heaven: Travels with Cranes*, he reminds us that, just as cranes and their mythology observe no political or geographic boundaries, we too must soar beyond these human constructs in our efforts to conserve the ancient creatures and their habitats. But why should we care about cranes in the first place? One reason, in Matthiessen's words, is that these elegant birds are "striking metaphors for the vanishing wilderness of our once bountiful earth." He also notes the importance of cranes as umbrella species; their protection in the wild will help conserve a host of other species, as well as the clean water, air, and earth of cranes' extensive territories.

Cranes are found on every continent except South America, but of the 15 extant species, 11 are considered threatened or endangered, primarily due to the activities of humans. Pollution, dam-building, drainage of wetlands, and other activities that impact Earth's freshwater are of particular concern to the preservation of these predomi-

nantly wetland birds. To address these threats and their potential remedies, Matthiessen weaves a dense tale of crane biology and evolution, politics and culture, the environment and science. Each chapter addresses these issues by looking at a specific crane population in a certain country. During the past decade, the author was

able to visit almost every locale he discusses, from Australia to India to Asia and beyond, often in conjunction with members of the International Crane Foundation (ICF), based in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Matthiessen's lyrical tone and deft ability to convey these primary observations carry the reader smoothly through the ever-changing terrain. As the narrative glides from scientific names for cranes to common ones and then on to the finer points of crane evolution, the text occasionally becomes difficult to follow. However, detailed illustrations by Robert Bateman help the reader—especially the non-birder—track each change in species as Matthiessen traverses the globe.

Matthiessen begins with the red-crowned and white-naped cranes found in the Amur River basin, which forms the border between eastern Russia and China. The tension between delegates at an international crane conference reflects larger political and environmental pressures in the region, but, despite bouts of open animosity, the delegates agree to sign a nonbinding resolution to work for the protection of the Amur, thanks in no small part to the role of the ICF as mediator—a role that it plays throughout the world.

Throughout the book, Matthiessen counters despair for the plight of cranes with hope. He suggests that we have been given a chance to redeem ourselves for the havoc our environmental sins have wreaked on cranes and their habitats. He writes, "In this genocidal epoch when the human animal is destroying its own kind almost everywhere on Earth, what hope can there be for cranes and tigers? And yet...?" Crane populations dwindled in southeast Asia during the Korean War, but they now thrive in the wetlands of the demilitarized zone, which forms the border between North and South Korea, simply because it is unoccupied by humans. Once severely threatened in Wisconsin, Aldo Leopold's beloved sandhill cranes are flourishing, and in March of 2000, the first known wild whooping crane was born in the United States in 60 years. Despite teetering on the brink of extinction, so far, in part due to captive breeding programs, the whooper has prevailed.

Because there are no easy solutions to the myriad threats facing crane populations, Matthiessen falters occasionally in his quest for optimism. His examples of world cooperation and commitment, however, are remarkable. For the most part, this book takes flight and migrates steadily toward the real possibility of world crane conservation and all it entails.

reviewed by
Megan
Schuknecht

PETER MATTHIESSEN

THE BIRDS OF HEAVEN



Travels with Cranes

PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS BY
ROBERT BATEMAN

This Sovereign Land: A New Vision for Governing the West

by Daniel Kemmis, Island Press, 2001

Empire is something of a dirty word in American English. It conjures up images of colonialism, the Soviets, and Darth Vader. Americans like to think that they belong to a nation, not an empire. Yet Western Americans often feel otherwise. With over 90 percent of federal land located in the West, many Westerners view the feds as nosy, unwelcome landlords. In *This Sovereign Land*, Daniel Kemmis effectively argues that federal lands should become the vehicle for devolution of decision-making authority to the peoples of the western United States.

reviewed by
Jennifer
Sutton

Tracing a history of federal land management through the wise use movement, Kemmis attempts to answer questions of Western sovereignty.

Kemmis finds that the current federal decision-making structure is inherently undemocratic and that the time is ripe for change.

Non-Western Americans are resistant to let Westerners become sovereign over their lands—and with good reason, according to Kemmis: “Certainly the past history of western efforts to decentralize control of the public lands gives weight to these fears, given that it has so often been resource extractors and users who have led the various versions of western resistance to centralized management.” In his column in *Harper’s Magazine*, Bernard De Voto once characterized the attitude of Westerners toward the feds as “get out and give us more money.” Kemmis acknowledges the past truth in this stereotype, but he argues that leadership in the region has matured, nudged along by an influx of non-Westerners (and their money).

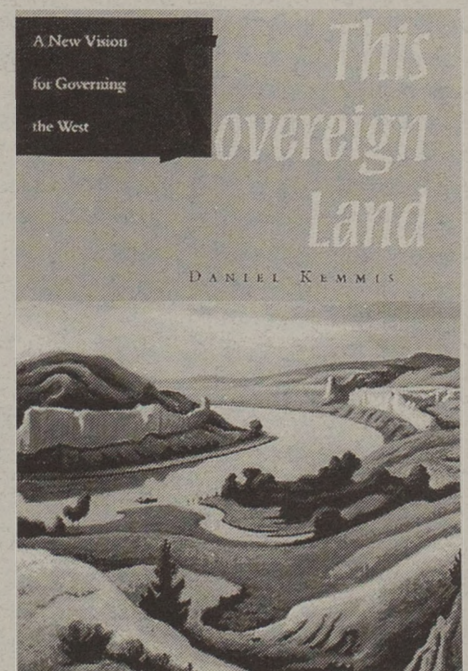
While recognizing the importance of environmental legislation, Kemmis questions its continued validity, as local land management decisions bog down in polarizing legal battles. He takes both the Democratic Party and the national environmental movement to task for impeding the efforts of local decision-making. Environmental groups are quick to bring out the *national* in national forest or national park, holding land management agencies accountable to the Endangered Species Act or the National Environmental Policy Act, while stymieing the efforts of Westerners to take responsibility for their own backyards.

“Solving shared problems together on behalf of a shared place is the essence of democracy,” Kemmis states. The collaborative movement has started small, with watershed councils and federally sponsored Resource Advisory Councils. Kemmis advocates building on this foundation and working toward a watershed democracy. “It seems all but inevitable that a major component of the evolution of these new institutions will be the development of various river basin governing structures.” Most watersheds in the West encompass a few states, tribes, and a substantial

amount of Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management land. Kemmis sees potential for compacts to address these sovereignty issues. The stakeholders—state employees, tribe members, and interest groups representatives—would form the backbone of a compact. However, such a group would require decision-making power, not just an advisory role. A successful compact would lead to the formation of other watershed democracies. Kemmis asserts, “Collaboration as it has grown up out of western soil poses a fundamental threat to national sovereignty.” In his view, some transfer of control over national public lands is inevitable.

Although persuasive, Kemmis’ case is not airtight, and his discussion of stakeholders in a watershed democracy is incomplete. For instance, the Clark Fork River in western Montana is the nation’s largest Superfund site. Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) has been charged with clean up. What voice would ARCO have in a Clark Fork watershed democracy? Kemmis also ignores the underclass of the West. With some of the lowest per-capita incomes in the nation, not all Westerners work for extractive industries, care about conservation, or own land. This non-landed population relies on national policies, such as an enforced minimum wage and school lunch programs. It is unclear how these policies would fare after devolution of power to more organic units of organization.

Overall, Kemmis makes a convincing case for changing the power structure in the United States and reminds Americans that our government was constructed to be dynamic. The political left often assigns blame to globalization for environmental justice and natural resource disputes. Kemmis sees globalization as a potential complement to conservation. His challenge to long-held convictions of sovereignty should cause interest groups across the spectrum to reevaluate their goals and to identify those that could come to fruition through this purer form of democracy.



The Messengers

My window bisects them in the autumn field,
but they move in one vision, from blurred to real.
Grace in a meadow:
two sandhill cranes in a crowd of steer grazing dry grass.
Eyeblink.
Only the fence rolls past.
Wheel flickering beneath your fingers, and I have lost them to distraction.
They fade into the scowling pasture
as we are driving faster
away from a moment like music played on radiowaves flaring farther gone
away into fragments of a final silence.
I have fathomed this for all the days since,
dreaming of birds and butchery.

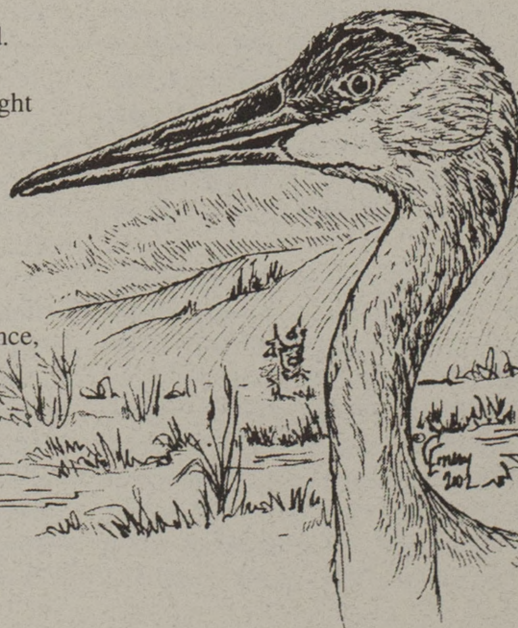
On this day of light, the sun
crashes through pines with hooved feet and pointed horns,
but I dwell only on that range of brittle grass
trampled by roving bovines somnambulantlly ambling
each around the sloping rump of the others
while deliberately, softly, those two gentle dancers weave their long legs
among the swaying fronds,
sidestepping, I am sure, the piles of manure.

In the muddy birth meeting of lake and plain,
shorebound souls in limbo hunger for paradise.
The cranes descend to wetlands and prairies from wide wounds behind the clouds
while blind eyes, sewn shut, cannot find heaven.

We have shot the messengers:
migrating words flocking in a delicate congruency of birds
bugling loud to the horizons, to life on the wing,
primary, primal, feathered and unfettered.
Warriors whistle in wingbones ancient summons of home.
No pause for rest, carrying the stones,
wakeful, watchful, radar angels lowfly across the grid.
They seek refuge,
carving a glimpse of light, of silhouettes in haloed flight
over herd like a rushing of wind
overheard before the rains begin.

Then the feet of cranes again
touch the earth like water splashing,
crowns geranium red fire flashing,
burning in the twilight air, one and one conjoin in dance,
two lives contained in a single mated glance.

Carrie Naughton



Claire Emery

last words

PIGEONS AND F-16s

I just moved for the second time in 12 months, and I'm grateful it's over. Moving exhausts me, and this time the process was complicated by the snow that fell the entire week I packed my belongings across town. I'd hoped that February's relatively mild weather would continue seamlessly into March. So much for an early end to winter in western Montana. But now, late April, the snow is receding from the higher mountain peaks, and rows of tulips are pushing up my yard. I finally feel settled in my new place, like I can relax and enjoy spring.

I live in an old barn now, the backside of which has been converted into a nebulous apartment. Located several miles west of Missoula, on a stretch of two-lane road that feels satisfyingly like country, the barn's big windows gaze out at the Clark Fork River and, beyond it, part of the Bitterroot Range. Inside, rafters slant into high, cobwebby ceilings, and a ladder leads to my bedroom, a small loft. Mice frequent the kitchen cupboards, and those notorious hobo spiders inhabit the bathroom; but, on the brighter side, my dog Aster already has become best friends with Sanford, the sad-eyed Weimaraner who lives next door. And she's learning to catch spiders.

The best part of living in the barn is the pigeons. A group of them nest in the main part of the building. I see them taking off, landing, and cruising around the barn's cupola, and a loud noise or handclap will startle the whole flock into rising up in a gray, darting mob toward the river. Say what you will about pigeons—David Quammen might call them a pesky, "weedy" species—I like sharing the barn with them. We keep an eye on each other. When I look skyward to watch them circle, I wonder how I must appear to them, what they think of this purposeful human and her voluble, red dog. Do they, at some level, resent my presence? Or do they appreciate the fact that Aster and I keep the marauding eagles and hawks from their nests?

My relationship with the pigeons borders on the intimate. At night, as I lie on the mattress in the loft, I hear them talking in their sleep. The flock must be huge; either that, or their nests must be opposite my bed, because sometimes the walls seem to vibrate with their coos—soft, whispery murmurs that I somehow find comforting.

I have reason to contemplate the effect the pigeons have on me, this abstract sense that I have companions at the barn, guarding over me at night. My mother feels the same way about F-16s.

I went back east to visit my family over Christmas. I hadn't been looking forward to the trip this year. Given the general climate of anxiety and fear that September's terrorist acts had created, I felt that leaving Missoula, its ring of mountains and sky encircling me like a security blanket, was a bad idea. I hadn't yet made the acquaintance of the pigeons at the barn; they probably only would have made my decision to go back more difficult.

In the end, of course, I found myself unable to turn my back on the holidays, and I took an uneventful flight to Virginia, where I found the confidence that prevailed there reassuring, if a little fatalistic. I wondered if people felt isolated, alone in their vulnerability. One evening at my parents' house, my mother cut off our conversation mid-sentence by raising a finger. "Listen," she said, lifting her eyes to the ceiling. A plane roared distantly. Mom said, "That's the sound of an F-16. They've been patrolling cities on the east coast since September 11th." The fighter jet out there, so remote in the vast, watchful dark—I shivered a little with the creepiness of it. My mother continued, "At night, when I can't sleep, I lie in bed and listen to the F-16s."

My mother is something of a romantic. When she mulled over her response to the sound of the F-16s, I guessed that her feelings had little to do with war, with the fighters protecting her from a terrorist attack. Like me, she found a comfort in this tenuous connection with another, in the way her awareness of the jet anchored it to Earth. Now, as I lie in my own little nest in the barn, watching the sky turn from black to gray and listening to the pigeons mumble and flap, my thoughts return to my mother and the F-16s, to the solace that she and I both find in the idea of sentinels in the sky. What power—ambiguous and ineffable—do these aviators possess for us to find them so compelling? I can't help but see them as almost godlike. Their vision is borderless; all our secrets are revealed to them. And the sky, barely huge enough to hold them and their migrations, is a blue cathedral. We can only strain to hear a little of their sound—their dialogue—and pray to find some sense in it.

KATIE MCKALIP



Camas

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Subscriptions - 1 year for \$12, 2 years for \$20. **Back issues are \$3 each:**
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